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## STATEN ISLAND BOARD OF REALTORS

### Agent Possible Questions

**Will CSS provide a local phone number?**

Yes. The local number to schedule an appointment is 718 682-0000.

**What is a Showing Code?**

A showing code is a 4 to 10 digit code, similar to a PIN number that you will use to further identify you when scheduling showings. It does TWO things for you. First, if you have a hard last name to spell, it helps the CSS Customer Service representative to find your name in the database much quicker. Second, it adds an additional layer of security for you, CSS and the seller. You must have a showing code to schedule a showing appointment on Staten Island.

**Will my Showing Code have to change every quarter?**

No. the Showing Code is between you and CSS. We do not require that you change it although you can change it whenever you like.

**What should I use for my Showing Code?**

Choose a code that is easy for you to remember. Do not use your MLS ID.

**Do I have to put all of my listings on CSS?**

Yes. You have to at least put showing instructions on each of your listings. At a minimum, you need to instruct CSS to call you or your office regarding the showing request. However, we do not recommend this as it will probably reduce the number of showings on your listings and increase the chances of a miscommunication. It is better to have us contact your sellers directly on your behalf. Remember, the concept of Centralized Showing Service is to provide ONE phone number for agents to call to schedule all of their showings. If they have to call another number to schedule an appointment on your listing, they will see it as an inconvenience and may not make that call.



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**Will SIBOR provide me a letter to explain the change to my sellers?**

Because your sellers are still your clients, we recommend that you write a letter explaining the benefits of the change. We will, however, provide a flyer for you to use, in addition to other marketing materials that detail how to best use CSS and the benefits of the service. The materials are available on the "Forms Section" of the CSS website or on the MLS Homepage.

**What happens if a non-SIBOR agent wants to schedule a showing?**

CSS will verify that they are a legitimate agent by going to the New York state licensing website. If they are a valid, licensed agent we will continue to schedule the appointment and call their office to ensure we have correct contact information. If we cannot validate them, we will instruct them to call the listing agent of the property.

**What if I, the listing agent, have to be present for a showing?**

If you need to be present to open the house for a showing, put "Listing Agent Must Be Present" in the special showing instructions. We will call the Listing Agent and coordinate an acceptable time between the listing and showing agents.

**What if I want my office to call the homeowners?**

We don't recommend this since it may reduce the number of showings you are able to get on your listings as it reduces the convenience for the showing agent. However, you would put in the showing instructions to have CSS call the listing office and notify them of the showing request. We will call the listing office, which will set the appointment with the seller and notify CSS.

**Will you coordinate the handing off of keys between agents showing a property?**

CSS will not coordinate key hands off. However, via the key inventory screen, the office will still be able to help coordinate these hand-offs.

**How soon will you call the seller on my listing?**

CSS will attempt to call the seller almost immediately after we receive the showing request. We have standards in place that require our Customer Service Representatives to call within a specified time between when the request is received to the start of the requested appointment time. If we can't reach the seller, we will continue to try. Additionally, we will give the Showing Agent updates if we are having a hard time reaching the seller. If a showing is scheduled for the following day and CSS hasn't been able to reach the seller by our closing time, the Customer Service Representative is REQUIRED to call the occupant one more time AND give a final update to the showing agent before they can go home.



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**What will you do if a line is busy? Will you keep calling?**

Yes, if the listing is coded as a “courtesy call”, the agent will still be able to show the property, but we will continue to call until the end of the appointment period. If an appointment is required to show the listing, we will continue to call while giving the showing agent updates on the status of their showing. We want to make sure the showing agent knows whether or not they can show the listing.

**Will you call me if you can’t reach the seller?**

You will be notified via email as well as through the online reports of appointments that are “Cancelled/Unable Contact Sellers”. As the Listing Agent you will be providing us all of the available numbers for the sellers. However, you can put in the special instructions to contact you, the listing agent, if we aren’t able to reach the seller. Remember, you are kept abreast of ALL showing activity on your listings via our online reports.

**How do you know if there is a “No Show”?**

If an appointment is set for between 1 and 2 p.m., for example, and the seller calls at 2:15 p.m., our Customer Service Representatives may ask the seller to hold while we call the Showing Agent to see if they are still going to show. If the seller calls back at 2:30 or 2:45 p.m., we will mark it as a “No Show.” The “No Show” is then reported back to the agent AND to the Board. **Please make sure that if you have to cancel an appointment to call CSS.**

**How does CSS handle picking up keys at the office?**

When providing CSS the special instructions, you will indicate that a key must be picked up at the office. We will pass that information along to the showing agent. Additionally, each office will have access to a Key Inventory screen that will assist them in knowing who has keys checked out for certain listings and how many are left. It will provide the office warnings if there is a potential conflict in key availability. CSS will not coordinate key hands off. However, via the key inventory screen, the office will still be able to help coordinate these hand-offs.

**How many keys should I have at the office on each of my listings?**

We don’t have a minimum requirement. However, we recommend either using a lockbox or having enough to cover three showings at the same time. If you are fortunate enough to have a hot listing, you want to make sure that you have enough keys to cover it.

**How do I access information about showings on my listings?**

You will be able to access comprehensive showing histories and the feedback collected via the MLS. After you log into the MLS there will be “links” over to our website where you can see reports on your listings.

**Can I schedule showings through the MLS?**



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YES! You will actually be able to schedule showings right from the "Schedule Appointment" link on the "Agent Full" report. So you have access 24 hours a day. You will find this to be an incredible convenience.

**What are the hours for Centralized Showing Service (CSS)?**

The call center is open from 8am to 9pm Monday through Saturday and 8am to 7pm on Sunday. Scheduling of showings can also be done via the MLS 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

**Will my calls be answered by an overseas operator?**

No. Your calls will be answered by a group of Customer Service Representatives dedicated to Staten Island located in Houston, TX.

**How do you handle language differences?**

Normally, the concern with individuals who speak languages other than English involves calling the sellers. We currently have an abundance of Spanish speakers and are working on hiring Representatives who speak Polish, Russian and Chinese. YOU can mark these listings as another language and have a CSS representative who is skilled in that language then take over the responsibility for making the call to the homeowner. However, you may still want to continue to mark those listings as "Call Office" or "Call Listing Agent". We will just notify you of the appointment request.

**How do you handle it if you receive a call from an upset seller?**

All of our associates are trained as to how to handle an upset seller. If they are still upset by the end of the call, we will notify the Listing Agent in order to ensure that you don't get blind-sided.

**Will you notify us via email if the seller changes showing instructions?**

Only if they make a "change request" via the website. If they make a change over the phone, we will notify you if it affects the instructions for MORE THAN A DAY. We also want to prevent tenants from saying, "No showings for two weeks."

**Will you notify us if another agent is scheduled to show at the same time I want to show?**

Yes, we will let you know there is someone else scheduled, but we still let you show. Again, our goal is to get as many showings on the property as possible in order to get a faster sale. We don't want to restrict showings just because an agent has scheduled a showing from 1 and 3 p.m.

**What are the time frame restrictions on showings?**

We recommend Showing Agents allow two hours for showings. Again, however, we will not restrict them. We want as many showings as possible. We don't like long time frames either, but we are here to serve you.



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**How will we get you our showing instructions when we convert our listings to CSS?**

You can fax them into CSS, call CSS with them, or enter them into a special page accessible through the MLS.

**How will you get email addresses?**

There are several ways we access email addresses. In addition to receiving them through a download from the MLS, we also collect them from agents as they convert their listings via an Agent Information form. Moreover, after things calm down, we will occasionally ask agents calling us to verify their email address.

**What oversight will the Staten Island Board of Realtors have?**

A monthly statistical report will be presented to the board, in addition to an open line of communication with CSS to discuss service issues and development ideas. CSS will conduct any requested public forum meetings for REALTORS® to share their suggestions or concerns with CSS management.

**Will the SIBOR be able to get out of the contract if necessary?**

A performance provision is included in the contract that allows for SIBOR or CSS to terminate the contract as a result of performance default.

**What is the CSS performance guarantee?**

A standard performance statistic has been designed with seven other associations based largely on answer times (which are the best indicators of performance in our business) and the number of times that standard is breached. In the event of excessive breaches, SIBOR will have the option to terminate the agreement.

**What training will CSS and SIBOR provide?**

CSS will conduct regular training classes at the SIBOR office or at a designated area. On-site training with a CSS representative can also be scheduled in advance. During the initial conversion, CSS will train all offices of five or more agents in their offices (to increase participation) AND provide training at the board office.



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**How does CSS train its associates?**

All CSS Customer Service Representatives undergo five days of training with a full-time trainer. Following this training, new associates are tested and, upon achieving acceptable test scores, they graduate to the call center floor where they sit with a Team Leader who can answer any questions they might have.

**How will CSS get all of its new associates trained in time?**

CSS is already staffed to handle the increase in call volumes from Staten Island. CSS also has a pool of over 600 experienced associates to pull from, if necessary, to help train or answer calls. Each CSS office has a Human Resource Specialist to ensure that only associates committed to excellent customer service are hired. Each CSS call center also has a Certified Trainer dedicated to ensuring our CSRs are well-prepared to handle various situations in a professional manner.

**Will CSS sell my email address or my seller's information in any way?**

No. CSS does not, and will not, sell information on its REALTOR<sup>®</sup> members or board associations. This provision is also in our standard Association contract.

**What liabilities does SIBOR have in regard to CSS?**

In general, none. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the agent to ensure that all showing instructions (including status) are correct. Listing Brokers are subject to MLS Rules Violations for incorrect or incomplete instructions. CSS provides numerous avenues for agents to access this information.

**Will CSS charge a transfer fee if I transfer offices?**

No.

**How many phone lines will CSS have?**

Currently, CSS has 92 phone lines in our office that will service Staten Island. Based on a phone line analysis performed by the telephone company, we have a sufficient number of lines to handle the call volumes. To ensure this is correct, a quarterly audit is conducted.

**Is there any fee for the CSS website?**

No. The CSS website which will be accessed via the MLS is included in the service.





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**Does CSS have insurance?**

Yes, CSS is bonded and maintains errors and omissions insurance.

**What type of backup systems does CSS have?**

CSS backs up its data by doing data replication with our corporate office thereby ensuring it is safely housed in another call center in the event of an emergency. CSS also has backup procedures in place to transfer calls from the Houston call center to one of our other five call centers in the event of a disaster.

**Will CSS have a designated representative to answer questions and concerns?**

Yes. Your designated representative is based out of the New York City area, and will be available to provide additional website training as needed.

**How many employees will you have here?**

We anticipate having between 25 and 30 employees servicing Staten Island. There will be a separate group specifically devoted to Staten Island so that both Staten Island REALTORS® and sellers will have the opportunity to know our Customer Service Representatives on a more personal, yet professional level.

**What is your feedback return rate?"**

In heavily saturated markets such as Raleigh, it is between 65 - 75 percent.

**What about liabilities? Is CSS liable for things that are stolen?**

Remember, all we do is schedule appointments. We cannot be responsible for every buyer that enters a home. That is the agent's responsibility. In regard to a non-agent accessing our information, it should be noted that:

1. We do not publish our telephone number, so only agents will have it;
2. We employ the use of Showing Codes for further protection;
3. We schedule more than 15 million showings each year and have never had problem;
4. Electronic Lockboxes add an additional layer of security. We recommend their use.

**What if a buyer calls CSS?**

If a buyer calls CSS, we first will ask them how they got our number. We then suggest they call the agent that is helping them. If they are unsure who that person is, we will direct the prospective buyer to the listing agent on the property.



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**Does CSS do background checks on their employees?**

CSS performs background and employment reference checks on all of our employees. Applicants are also put through typing and reading comprehension tests before they are hired. We also conduct random drug testing.

**What other quality controls do you have?**

We have an entire department dedicated to quality control. The members of this team act as secret callers and grade the quality performance of our representatives. Those figures are worked into the manager's bonus. We also have surveys that are presented to the sellers on our website after 30 days on the service (if they have been given access to our website.) These surveys also play into our managers' bonuses. We also have an individual on staff which collects and corrects email addresses that can be provided to the board.

**How do you know you will be staffed appropriately?**

As CSS has grown from 200 to 97,000 agents, we have developed a system of ratios and formulas that make it possible to accurately (within 1 - 2 percent) staff our call centers. These formulas take into account the number of available listings and the estimated number of calls for each day of the coming week. The only variables are weather and the number of new agents enrolled that week. In regard to weather, experience has taught us that if there have been three days of bad weather, then the first nice day will result in an increase in calls. Therefore, we send our representatives home on the bad weather days and call them in for the nice weather day. We typically cater lunches for our representatives on that first nice weather day.

**What do you do to reduce turnover of CSS associates? What is your turnover?**

We provide our representatives with tuition reimbursement, perfect attendance bonuses, secret caller bonuses and 401K. We offer comprehensive health insurance, of which we pay 90 percent of the premium. Additionally, we frequently run contests and games to keep up morale. Most of the current employees have been at their positions for almost two years. In our other locations turnover runs between 10 and 15 percent – about half the national average for call centers.

**Does CSS provide any market-wide statistical information?**

Yes. We provide information on showing trends based on MLS map area and price. This is a newer feature that has become exceptionally popular with our other board- and MLS-wide customers.



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