

Policy on the Respect and Dignity of Worth for All¹

General Principle: Respect for the Dignity of Worth for All

As an ethical organization, all people associated with Calgary Outlinks, including clients, volunteers, board members, staff, contractors, and members understand and commits to the respect and dignity of worth of all as the highest driving principle in the organization.

This principle is the value that that every person should be treated as a person or an end in themselves, not as an object or a means to an end. We acknowledge that all persons have a right to have their innate worth as human beings appreciated and that this worth is not dependent upon any ascribed characteristics, competencies, status in society, other personal characteristic, or expressions of oneself. All people have the right to be treated with dignity.

Some key components of respecting the dignity of all also related to a variety of important values, these include:

Value of Respect of Others

Respect is a pattern of behavior that is found in healthy relationships. It is reciprocal, to receive respect a person must also strive to give respect, something all people have the right to receive. Respect is based on the empathy of others. People who respect one another, empathize with each other, although do not have to take on another's perspective as their own, strive to trust and support each other, and value each other's autonomous decision making and independence.

¹ These policies are based upon, and adapted from, ethical principles found within philosophy literature, and various professional codes of ethics, including:

- The Code of Ethics for Psychologists: <http://www.cpa.ca/aboutcpa/committees/ethics/codeofethics/>
- The Canadian Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics: <http://www.casw-acts.ca/en/what-social-work/casw-code-ethics>
- Standards for Practice of North American Child and youth Care Professionals: <http://www.pitt.edu/~mattgly/CYCethics.html>

This policy statement in no way replaces professional responsibility to follow codes of ethics of one's professional body.

Value of Personal Autonomy and Choice

A key part of respecting the dignity of all is to respect all person's rights to self-determination, personal liberty, and choice. This means respecting another's choices when they are different than one's own.

With respect to an LGBTQ+ organization, it includes, but is not limited to, striving to ensure all feel safe in their decisions. It includes, but is not exclusive about, not unduly outing people that are in service with the organization, and respects ones right to choose when to out oneself. It also includes the idea the organization should not adopt any policies or procedures that may potentially out another person, encourage outing of others, or take away from a person from making this choice.

Value of Fairness

Respecting the dignity of worth of all also means treating others with fairness as a matter of providing any services within the organization or in the overall operations and governance of these services. It is of particular importance that those in positions of overseeing the organization or providing service have a responsibility to protect clients in their service and promote fairness in all of their activities. It extends to the context of respecting the rights of others and of responsible caring of persons involved in services, including to ensure that we do no harm on all that we do.

Issues of fairness extend to the organization's obligation to develop and follow procedures to establish natural justice, including such liberties as respecting privacy, informed, consent, confidentiality, fair treatment, and due process.

Valuing Interests of the Other Person over One's Own Self-Interests

One of the primary ways to ensure the respect for the dignity and worth of all is implemented while providing service to others is to value the interests of others over one's own self-interests, especially during any service provision.

This value includes the understanding that no human be is the same as oneself and there will often be conflicts in the interests among self and others, and in the expression of those interests. However, it means to always be willing to work in respectful partnership with others, be self-reflective, and be open to respectful external suggestions and criticisms.

Valuing another person's interests does not mean taking on their interests as your own. Rather, it is being able to describe and strive to empathize with other's interests, even while declaring your own self-interests.

This includes one's right and obligation to declare one's self-interests and boundaries when conflicts arise, to respect others interests and boundaries even when they are very different from

one's own. It also includes the right and obligation to respectfully say no or set limits with others when one's own interests and boundaries are being unduly infringed upon.

Valuing Self-in-Relationship

Respecting the dignity of worth of people also suggests respecting the relationships of people. Valuing self-in-relationship acknowledges the human need to be in relationships of many kinds. It means respecting these relationships, even when one may not want to be in the same type of relationships as you might come across with others. It does not include tolerating abusive, harassing, or bullying behaviours of any sort within any relationship.

Valuing Empathy-within-Relationships

Respecting the dignity of worth of people requires empathy within relationships. Empathy can only be achieved through effective listening to others. Empathy is the ability to take the perspective of another, or put oneself in the shoes of another, to gain insight and understanding about others' perspectives, needs, views, expectations, fears, strengths and weaknesses. Only through striving to understand the different interests and aspects of a person's life can one truly respect the other person.

Important Considerations while Respecting the Dignity of Worth of People

Respecting the Context. Acknowledging context understands that as situations change the application of principles also changes. In the development of policy and their implementation, scenarios should be developed from the perspective of different contexts to test these policies.

Policy development is not simply making rules to respond to specific scenarios. The organization should strive to develop policies and procedures flexible to changing and complex contexts.

Acknowledging context while respecting others and their interests requires the recognition that others are different than oneself, all people (and oneself) are not the same or perfect beings in reality or among the perception of others. This acknowledges that people may do things differently from one another or show variation in different contexts and situations. People should be respected at all times despite real or perceived expression of these variations.

Acknowledging Power-in-Relationships. Acknowledging power in relationships understands that personal power is not absolute and that personal power and autonomy of choice changes as the context and types of relationships change. In the development of policy and their implementation, scenarios should be developed from the perspective that as context and relationships change so does power-in-relationships and persons' autonomy of choice.

Regardless of the context, it should be acknowledged that Calgary Outlinks provides service to others and positions in the implementation of this service have different power relationships.

Board members, staff, and volunteer workers often have real or perceived power greater than clients or those receiving services.

A responsibility of care exists within these relationships, suggesting taking steps to always try to minimize the undue effects of power, to always respect the dignity of worth of others regardless of the degree of personal power, and to strive to encourage others to make autonomous choices regardless of perceived or real personal power.

Striving to Empower Others. Calgary Outlink understands that it is often working with vulnerable people. Board members, staff, and volunteer workers have the responsibility to respect the dignity of all persons with whom they come in contact as service providers, and acknowledges their greatest responsibility be to those persons in the most vulnerable position.

Board members, staff, and volunteer workers commit to encouraging those more vulnerable than themselves to make autonomous choices regardless of their perceived or real personal power. This suggests striving to empower others to make autonomous choices and avoid placing vulnerable people in powerless positions, or positions of victimization.

Empowering others acknowledge that as a person's vulnerabilities may increase, or as the power of persons to control their environment or their lives decreases, service providers have an increasing responsibility to encourage safeguards to protect the rights of the persons involved. When service providers cannot or do not have the competency or ability to protect, then they should seek advice and/or referrals to others who may have the competency or ability to protect.