

## Statement on Equality

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As an ethical organization, as an organization that follows a policy of respect for the dignity and worth of all people, and an organization that has a respectful workplace policy; Calgary Outlink treats people with equality and dignity. Some key components of our statement on equality are as follows and are used in procedural decisions in services and operations of all of its programs.

### Respect and Dignity

All people associated with Calgary Outlinks, including clients, volunteers, board members, staff, contractors, and members understand and commits to treating people with equality, fairness, and dignity as a matter of due process in all of its activities. This is based on the principle 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.”

### Equality

Any person, regardless of any ascribed characteristic, should be treated the same as all other people and not treated differently based on these characteristics. This includes treatment in service provision, continuance of services, employment, continuance of employment, decisions of volunteer roles, continuance of volunteer roles, and within day-to-day operations.

### Non-Differential Treatment

In the operations of any program, service, or in volunteer and employment scenarios there cannot be differential treatment based on ascribed characteristics, or arbitrary factors and decision-making. Any person should not be discriminated against, excluded, removed, harassed, bullied, or otherwise treated differently.

### Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as:

- 1) differential treatment of one person or a group of persons compared to another person or group of people;
- 2) the differential treatment was arbitrary (unrelated to the context of the problem and scenario at hand); and
- 3) it was based on ascribed characteristics.

### **Non-Arbitrary Decision-Making**

When differential treatment must occur in scenarios, then the decision to do so must strive to be based on: 1) reasonable and proportional decisions based on facts, known information, and within the context at hand, 2) made in the best intentions for the best possible decision of all parties involved within the scenario, and 3) only made to solve the problems faced in the context at hand. If the decision made are not based on the facts, information known, and the context of the problems faced, then it should be noted that the decision is likely arbitrary and should be reconsidered.

### **Ascribed Characteristics**

Decision making and treatment of people in any situation should not be based on ascribed characteristics or characteristics that are fixed or otherwise largely permanent life circumstances. These include characteristics listed by the Alberta Human Rights Commission:

“race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religious beliefs, gender, age, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, family status, source of income and sexual orientation;”

other characteristics listed in the Alberta Human Rights Act:

“...gender identity, gender expression, ... and class of persons;”

other characteristics listed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms:

sex, language, or culture;

and those characteristics not directly stated by laws but important to Calgary Outlink such as:

sexual identity, sexual expression, sex (birth, assigned, or transition), sexual development (i.e. coming out stage or gender transition development), and relationship status.

### **Non-Ascribed Characteristics**

Characteristics unrelated to the above, such as factors that can change over time or behaviours that can be controlled by a person, are not ascribed characteristics. For example, these are such factors as those related to (not limited to) past or current physical behaviours, past or current verbal behaviours, learning, abilities, experience, competencies, publications, references/reputation, and criminal histories.

## **Important Considerations while Respecting the Dignity and Worth of All People and Their Equality**

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.