

SECTION I:

CORE ORGANIZATIONAL

Subsection: GENERAL

Policy Title: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility

Policy Number: I, 1.1

Initial Date of President and CEO Approval: 2024-02-28

Last Review/Revision Date: 2024-02-28

Purpose

This policy articulates Strides Toronto's commitment to incorporate the value of diversity, and embed equity, inclusion, and accessibility in service delivery and within the organizational environment. This approach best positions Strides to deliver on its vision of "*Thriving children, youth, families and communities.*"

Application

All employees, students, volunteers, board members, committee members, consultants and contractors affiliated with Strides Toronto.

Definitions N/A

Diversity is the range of visible and invisible qualities, experiences, and identities that an individual possesses that contribute to their uniqueness. This can include, but is not limited to race, national or ethnic origin, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion, age, language, physical or mental ability, socio-economic status, among others.

Equity is a principle that recognizes that every individual is diverse, and as such may require different resources and opportunities to achieve success. Equitable outcomes denote fairness and justice in processes that acknowledge and address historical advantages and disadvantages.

Inclusion is an approach that embraces diversity and applies the principles of equity in supporting an environment where individuals feel safe, respected, and valued. It builds a culture of belonging by actively engaging and inviting contributions toward organizational and societal goals.

Accessibility is when systems, processes, services, and facilities are designed and operate to meet the needs of and benefit all users with dignity and respect and includes their input as a part of planning and organizational culture.

Policy

Strides Toronto (Strides) is committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving an environment that celebrates and values diversity, promotes equity, and ensures inclusion, accessibility and belonging. This is a fundamental pillar that shapes our organizational culture, policies, and practices. Hearing diverse perspectives and experiences helps enrich our collective knowledge and encourages involvement and participation from individuals from various backgrounds.

Promoting inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) will help cultivate and promote professional excellence and social accountability to better serve clients in a more responsive and adaptable way. This policy is consistent with the Code of Conduct, which reflects the organization's commitment to IDEA in all

Policy Title: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility**Policy Number: I, 1.1**

aspects of its work, ensuring that an individual's interactions with clients, the community, and each other reinforce respect and represent the dedication to creating an inclusive culture.

Organizational Commitment and Accountability

Strides Toronto will maintain open and transparent communication channels with the community, interested parties, and staff regarding IDEA initiatives, progress, and challenges. Strides will establish internal accountability structures, such as a dedicated IDEA Committee and/or task force(s), responsible for overseeing, implementing, and monitoring the effectiveness of IDEA initiatives, with the Director of EDI as the Accountable Lead.

Our Management Team is dedicated to championing equity, diversity, and inclusion within the organization, and embedding these principles into our strategic planning, decision-making processes, and day-to-day operations. Additionally, every member of our organization plays a vital role in upholding our commitment to IDEA, and we encourage active participation, engagement, and accountability at all levels to foster an inclusive organizational culture.

There is recognition that our IDEA journey is ongoing and requires continuous learning, adaptation and improvement, and Strides remains open to feedback, actively seeking ways to enhance our efforts and adapt to the evolving, intersectional needs of diverse communities.

Statement on the Commitment to Action on Anti-Black Racism

We stand firmly with the Black community and our colleagues to condemn all forms of racism. We recognize racism as a public health crisis that reveals itself in many ways: from microaggressions, to physical violence, to systemic perpetuation of power and privilege. These societal, structural, and individual aggressions have had a significant impact on the mental health and life outcomes of Black community members.

We will support initiatives aimed at changing the systems and policies that enable anti-Black racism today within our own organization and sectors within which we work, including increased accountability and transparency in systems that have historically oppressed Black communities. We are committed to collective action to address anti-Black racism in our organization and within our city.

Guiding Principles

We believe:

- Every employee, child, youth, and family is unique with varying life experiences, and should be encouraged to bring these perspectives to support decisions that affect them;
- Equitable and inclusive practices celebrate diversity, foster a culture of acceptance and belonging, and support the optimal development of all employees, children, youth, and families.
- All employees, volunteers and Board members contribute to a welcoming and inclusive environment, and we strive to have these groups reflect the diversity of the communities that we serve; and
- We will take proactive steps to build knowledge and capacity of staff, volunteers and Board members related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility principles.

Operating Principles

The IDEA Policy adheres to the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, the *Pay Equity Act*, and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. It will also be implemented according to the following operational principles.

Policy Title: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility**Policy Number: I, 1.1**

-
- Administrative practices promote equity and inclusion, creating an environment that recognizes and celebrates diversity.
 - Programs and services are delivered in ways that address systemic barriers and promote access for marginalized and equity-deserving populations.
 - Staff, volunteers, and board members will acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours necessary for identifying and eliminating bias and discrimination through training and ongoing professional development.
 - Collaboration with diverse community partners and professionals will be done to ensure unique needs are identified and included in program design and decision-making processes.
 - When hiring new staff and promoting current staff, we will ensure that selection-based criteria are appropriate and based on diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives.
 - Outreach, engagement activities, policies and procedures will be regularly reviewed to ensure they meet the changing needs of the communities served and organizational environment.

Additionally, we expect our Management Team and the Board of Directors to:

- Understand their role in promoting diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion.
- Act in accordance with this policy and its principles at all times.
- Actively discourage and address any actions contrary to this policy.

All employees, volunteers, board members and students are required to:

- Treat all employees, volunteers and clients with dignity and respect at all times.
- Act in accordance with this policy and the principles herein at all times.
- Identify and bring forward any situations that are contrary to this policy.

Reprisals

Any employee who files a valid complaint in accordance with this policy will not be subject to any form of retaliation either direct (e.g., dismissal or demotion) or indirect (e.g., being passed over for promotion). This includes individuals who participate or cooperate in any investigation regarding a breach of this policy.

Procedures

1. This policy will be posted on our website and at each physical site in a visible location for staff, volunteers, students, clients, families, and the public to review.
2. Strides Toronto will undertake activities that aim to create an equitable and inclusive organizational environment for all staff, volunteers, and students, addressing the nature of discrimination and informing all staff of the requirements of legislation and related workplace policies.
3. The recruitment, hiring and placement, and general human resource policies with respect to employees, students, volunteers, and board members will ensure adherence to this policy.
4. The annual operational plan will include specific goals to ensure that services provided will meet the needs of the diverse communities we support.
5. Any staff, student or volunteer who believes that this policy is being violated should seek consultation from their direct supervisor or any other management staff to lodge a complaint. Any client or member of the public who believes that this policy is being violated may approach any management staff of Strides Toronto to lodge a complaint. If the President and CEO is a direct source of the complaint, the written complaint should be submitted to the Chair of the Board of Directors.
6. All individuals involved with the organization shall review and acknowledge this policy upon joining

Policy Title: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility

Policy Number: I, 1.1

the organization and annually.

Cross References

- Human Rights, Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination policy
- Code of Conduct policy
- Accessibility policy
- Recruitment and Selection policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Staff Access to the Board of Directors policy
- Complaint Form
- *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report and 94 Calls to Action*
- *Ontario Human Rights Code*
- *Pay Equity Act*
- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.*

Appendices N/A