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**Subject: Equity and Accommodation Policy Statement and
Implementation Guidelines**

Type: Board - Ends

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Preamble

Kingston Employment and Youth Services (KEYS) is a community-based career and employment centre whose philosophy avows that we must treat all “with compassion, dignity and respect”.

We affirm the rights and dignity of each person. We acknowledge the fact that both systemic and personal discrimination create barriers for some groups to equal opportunity in society. In view of this reality, we must recognize that KEYS as an agency within society is not free from the dangers of personal and institutional discrimination and racism. This awareness has directed our thinking in the formation of this Policy and Implementation Plan.

In recognition that discrimination on the basis of **grounds including, but not limited to**, sex, age, religion/creed, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, place of origin, colour and ethnicity is unjust and unlawful, KEYS is committed to ensuring that no such discrimination exists within the agency as a result of its policies or practices whether intentional or unintentional.

KEYS recognizes that its duty not to discriminate includes the positive duty to remove barriers to employment and service within the agency and, where this is not fully possible, to accommodate individuals identified by the grounds enumerated above to the point of undue hardship.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND GUIDELINES

The language and objectives of this Policy and Implementation Plan are guided by such documents as the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s *Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate*, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and its regulations, and the *Employment Equity Act*.

POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This Policy and Implementation Plan is designed to ensure that all aspects of our agency represent, as fully as possible, the community we serve. Our community is diverse. This diversity is a source of strength and enrichment which we are committed to maintaining and fostering. This Policy and Implementation Plan demonstrates our commitment to provide a supportive and welcoming environment for all who use our services and all who work and volunteer here.

The board of KEYS will ensure the effectiveness and success of our Equity Policy by assigning staff responsibilities and allocating resources for the implementation of this policy. We will monitor and review the Policy and Implementation Plan on a regular basis to ensure that the goals we set in this policy are achieved.

DEFINITIONS

Disability

For the purposes of this policy and procedure, the term *disability* will refer to both mental and physical disability as defined by the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

Barriers

Obstacles preventing persons, and most notably persons with disabilities, from fully accessing opportunities and advantages customarily available to others. Barriers may be communicative, physical, technological, systemic, attitudinal, etc.

Discrimination

A distinction, whether intentional or not, but based on grounds relating to personal characteristics of the individual or group, which has the effect of imposing burdens, obligations or disadvantages on such individuals or groups not imposed on others. Discrimination may be direct or systemic. Discrimination on the basis of such grounds as race, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed, place of origin, ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, marital status and family status in such areas as employment and service is prohibited under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

Accommodation

Steps taken to eliminate discrimination resulting from rules, practices or barriers that have – or could have – an adverse impact on individuals identified by grounds enumerated in the Ontario Human Rights Code, and particularly people with

disabilities.

The Duty to Accommodate

The duty of employers and service providers to accommodate refers to their legal obligation to provide appropriate accommodation, to the point of undue hardship, in a manner respectful of an individual's needs, dignity, and confidentiality.

SECTION I. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Policy:

KEYS is committed to providing accessible, culturally sensitive and fair programs and services. By identifying and eliminating attitudinal, organizational and systemic barriers to access, we believe that our agency will become a more viable and vital part of the community we are mandated to serve.

By fostering strong links with the diverse groups in our service area, we can plan, deliver and evaluate our programs and services to ensure that KEYS is meeting identified needs.

Procedure:

Therefore, KEYS will take on-going action in the following areas:

- 1. To ensure that we provide accessible programs and services, KEYS will endeavour to:**
 - a. Participate on committees and in forums that represent community diversity, and identify any structural, racial, cultural, linguistic or economic barriers that may limit access to programs and services provided by KEYS;
 - b. Develop and implement measures that address and seek to overcome the identified barriers in each program and service;
 - c. Implement outreach strategies to correct any major imbalances in participation;
 - d. Offer programs and services in locations that are decentralized and accessible;
 - e. Make reasonable efforts to provide quality interpretation and accommodation for clients when necessary;
 - f. Advocate jointly with and on behalf of diverse communities to ensure that their program needs are met.

- 2. To ensure that our programs and services are sensitive and responsive to the needs of client groups identified by such grounds as sex, age, religion, ability, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and ethnicity, KEYS will endeavour to:**
 - a. Take into consideration the demographic diversity of the community in all our programs and the delivery of services;

- b. Promote positive attitudes towards and respect for any differences among the participants in our programs and users of our services;
- c. Review all resource material (e.g. films, books, art) that are used in programs to ensure that such materials are bias free and, where possible, actively promote diversity.

3 In order to ensure that we communicate information about our programs and services in an accessible and sensitive manner, KEYS will endeavour to:

- a. Express our commitment to provide written/verbal translation and alternative formatting of our promotional materials to the extent possible upon request;
- b. Use visual images in promotional materials that are reflective of the communities we serve;
- c. Ensure that our website and all web content conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.
- d. Translate agency publications into languages of major agency client groups.

SECTION II. TRAINING

Policy:

KEYS is committed to providing diversity awareness training to all staff, Board and volunteer members. The goal of our training is to help us become aware of specific barriers to participation on the basis of such grounds as sex, age, religion, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and ethnicity. We believe that diversity awareness training will assist staff, Board members and volunteers to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to serve the community effectively.

Procedure:

KEYS will take on-going action in the following areas:

- 1. In order to ensure that current staff, Board Members and volunteers receive diversity awareness training, KEYS will endeavour to:**
 - a. Provide training and/or educational materials for all staff, Board Members, volunteers aimed at improving their skills and knowledge to work effectively in a diverse, multi-cultural, multi-racial milieu, and increasing their awareness of client/staff rights and responsibilities under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

- b. Support and encourage staff to pursue opportunities for increased professional growth in the area of diversity training.
- 2. In order to ensure that staff, Board Members and volunteers are familiar with the KEYS Equity and Accommodation Policy and Implementation Plan, and other related policies, KEYS will:**
- a. Provide an orientation to the agency for all new staff and volunteers which will include a review of the KEYS Equity and Accommodation Policy and Implementation Plan; ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of any changes to this policy as they occur.
 - b. Require all prospective Board Members to read and declare their support for the KEYS Equity and Accommodation Policy and Implementation Plan.
 - c. Prominently post the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

SECTION III. EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

Policy Statement:

KEYS employment equity goal is that the composition of the agency's staff, Board and volunteer members will represent the diverse communities we serve as fully as possible.

Employment equity refers to actions which an organization takes in order to:

- a) identify discriminatory employment policies and practices and replace these by alternative non-discriminatory policies and practices;
- b) eliminate historic patterns of employment discrimination by setting hiring and promotion goals to bring about a more representative paid and volunteer workforce and;
- c) implement positive measures to overcome the long-term effects of discrimination.

Employment equity addresses both deliberate acts of discrimination and systemic discrimination.

The importance and legality of employment equity programs is affirmed in such legislation as the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and the *Federal Employment Equity Act*.

KEYS supports the principles and processes of employment equity as outlined in the

Employment Equity Act and will endeavour to implement them within the agency. It is understood, however, that federal employment equity provisions under the Federal Contractors Program will not legally bind KEYS until the agency both employs more than 100 persons and bids on federal contracts over \$200,000.

Further, while the legislation specifically names visible minorities, aboriginal peoples, people with disabilities, and women as designated groups, KEYS recognizes that other groups, such as speakers of English as a second language, new immigrants, and other groups that are represented in KEYS service area may also experience disadvantage in employment and require the removal of systemic barriers.

Special consideration will be given to the requirements for designated agencies under the *French Language Services Act*, including French language skills of the agency's staff and effective representation of Francophones on the Board of Directors and in the leadership team.

Procedure:

In an effort to abide by the principles of the employment equity legislation, KEYS will take on-going action in the following areas:

1. To achieve an inclusive and representative organization, KEYS will endeavour to:

- a. Conduct workforce surveys by collecting and maintaining data on the numerical distribution of people belonging to designated groups throughout the organization, including paid employees, Board Members and volunteers. The workforce surveys will be conducted in accordance with the procedures required by the *Employment Equity Act*.

Such information will be collected on a voluntary basis as permitted under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. Employees, Board Members and volunteers will be asked if they are Aboriginal, a person with a disability, a member of a racial minority, or a woman. People are not required to answer the questions if they prefer not to, but they must return their copy of the survey to the employer.

The data will be collected by means of self-identification. Employees, Board Members and volunteers will say for themselves whether they are members of designated group(s). Their word will not be subject to judgement by anyone else.

The data collected will be used only for employment equity purposes. Though completion of surveys may be monitored for the purpose of issuing reminders to those who have not returned them, no names will be attached to the actual surveys and the data on designated group status contained within individual surveys will be kept confidential.

Efforts will be made to collaborate and communicate with staff and volunteers on the collection of such data in order to maximize participation in the workforce survey. Assistance will be provided to people who need help filling out the survey;

- b. Collect data on the number of persons hired, promoted and terminated and the degree of designated group representation in the those numbers, as required;
- c. Obtain information on the local population in KEYS geographic area from the federal census and other resources where available. The census will be used as a guideline to monitor demographic changes in the community over time;
- d. Compare the internal data collected by the workforce survey to local population statistics and worker availability data.

2. In order to eliminate discriminatory recruitment practices, KEYS will endeavour to:

- a. Advertise new staff positions using a diversity of community media, as well as mainstream media, to ensure that designated groups have access to information regarding job postings;
- b. Advertise all positions in clear language that states the required qualifications and explains how to apply;
- c. State in all job postings that KEYS is dedicated to achieving a workforce that represents the diversity of the communities that we serve.

3. With respect to the hiring process, KEYS will:

- a. Conduct an employment systems review to identify any systemic barriers in the hiring process generally or in specific job descriptions, such as inappropriate educational requirements or Canadian experience;
- b. Provide a copy of the Equity and Accommodation Policy and Implementation Plan for all members of the hiring committees;
- c. Ensure that Canadian work experience is not a job requirement;
- d. Give consideration to experience gained from relevant volunteer work in the hiring process;
- e. Notify potential applicants about the availability of accommodation in the hiring process; if an accommodation is requested, consult with the applicant and provide appropriate accommodation;

- f. Once hired, inform successful candidates about existing accommodation policies and discuss appropriate accommodations should any barriers exist to full participation due to disability or other grounds.

- 4. **In order to ensure that any barriers to full participation in employment due to disability or other grounds are removed, KEYS will:**
 - a. Provide to staff, if requested, appropriate communication supports and work related information in accessible formats;
 - b. Provide to staff individualized workplace emergency response information and review the information as needed;
 - c. Develop a process for documenting individual accommodation plans;
 - d. Develop and document a return to work process for employees who are absent from work due to a disability and require accommodation to return to work;
 - e. Take into account accessibility needs of employees and provide appropriate accommodation in the performance management process, redeployment, or when offering advancement opportunities.

- 4. **In order to ensure that development training will be accessible to all staff based on the needs of individual staff, KEYS will:**
 - a. Assist staff to identify training needs, appropriate accommodations, and assist in career development and counselling;
 - b. Allocate financial resources so that training and development opportunities are made available across the agency.

Accountability

This policy should be reviewed on a regular basis, at least once in a three to five year period, through a strategic thinking process.