

# SOMERSET WEST COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## SECTION

**Title: ANTI-RACISM AND ANTI-OPPRESSION**

**Approved By:** Board of Directors

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## PURPOSE

The fundamental principles of equality and freedom from discrimination have been identified as key determinants of health.

SWCHC considers diversity a strength within the community and is dedicated to protecting the rights of individuals while working towards social inclusion. The observance of human rights is permeated and characterized by the principle of freedom from all forms of discrimination; therefore we support people and communities to enjoy the best possible health and well-being.

At SWCHC, we remove barriers to accessing services for people who are vulnerable because of their: race, class, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability, gender identification, colour, place of origin, ethnic origin, citizenship, immigration status, political affiliation, record of offences, marital status, family status, life experiences and appearances.

The Ontario Human Rights Code recognizes the inherent dignity and worth of every person and all people should have equal rights and opportunities without discrimination.

This Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Policy provides guidelines to ensure that policies, procedures, practices and programs of the SWCHC are consistent with the Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression principles.

## STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

- Diversity makes our community stronger
- We ensure our voice and actions speak to social justice, human rights and health equity
- Every person matters and that each person in their uniqueness can experience a sense of belonging and acceptance in the community. To this end, all racist and oppressive behaviour must be challenged directly and respectfully should they arise
- Many health disparities are rooted in fundamental social structural inequalities, which are inextricably related to racism and other forms of discrimination in society

- Power and privilege are part of the social structures in which we all participate, and we are all at times advantaged or disadvantaged by these power imbalances
- Oppression is manifested in racism, sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, transphobia, ageism, ableism and other forms of social exclusion
- Oppression is pervasive, restricting, hierarchical and dominant
- Every person in Ontario has a right to be free from racial discrimination and harassment in the social areas of employment, services, goods, facilities, housing accommodation, contracts and membership in trade and vocational associations

## POLICY

SWCHC recognizes that certain people in our society face oppressive experiences because of individual and systemic unequal power related to race, colour, culture, ethnicity, language and linguistic origin, ability, socio-economic class, age (children, youth, seniors), ancestry, aboriginal status, nationality, place of birth, religion or faith or other forms of conscientiously held beliefs, sex, gender (including gender identity and expression), sexuality (including sexual orientation), family status (including marital status), and residency/migratory status in Canada and types of life experiences.

SWCHC **does not** tolerate racism, prejudice or any form of discrimination. We are committed to representation of diversity in governance, employment and service delivery. We will work towards confronting and eliminating discriminatory or racist incidents and behaviour at the individual, organizational and societal level.

SWCHC works within an intersectional approach. We take into consideration the complexity of how people experience discrimination, recognize that the experience of discrimination may be unique and takes into account the social and historical context of the group. It places the focus on society's response to the individual as a result of the confluence of grounds and does not require the person to slot themselves into rigid compartments or categories. It addresses the fact that discrimination has evolved and tends to no longer be overt, but rather more subtle, multi-layered, systemic, environmental and institutionalized. (Reference: Ontario Human Rights Commission)

## ACTIONS

### GOVERNANCE

SWCHC is committed to achieving representation of the diversity of the community on its Board of Directors by ensuring that it has an equitable and transparent nomination process; and that this process is communicated to all members; and that members are committed to outreach beyond the current membership, if necessary, to achieve this goal.

## EMPLOYMENT

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SWCHC is committed to ensuring that members of equity seeking communities have equitable access to employment by achieving representation of equity seeking groups on its staff. This will be reflected in the SWCHC's employment practices including recruitment, selection, staff development, performance evaluation, retention, promotion and termination. The SWCHC is committed to maintaining an environment where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect and are free from all forms of discriminatory treatment, behaviour or practice. Discrimination, harassment, violence, and any other form of discriminatory practices will not be tolerated by the SWCHC. Discrimination does not have to be intentional. Systemic discrimination can result from practices or policies that appear to be neutral but, in reality, have a negative effect on groups or individuals based on ethnicity, gender identity, ancestry, place of origin, colour, citizenship, religion/spirituality, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, political affiliation and ability.

## SERVICE DELIVERY

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SWCHC is committed to ensuring that its services and programs are accessible to diverse communities. This involves ongoing review of current outreach, communications, program planning and evaluation, to ensure this goal is being met. The SWCHC's programs and services are delivered with an anti-racist, Anti-Oppression framework. Programs and services address the diverse needs of communities and assist them in strengthening their economic and social position so as to enable them to protect and support themselves.

## TRAINING AND EDUCATION

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SWCHC is committed and not limited to ensuring that those involved in the delivery of services and programs, as well as volunteers, our clients and community have the knowledge, understanding and skills to work with and provide services to members of diverse communities, particularly equity-seeking communities.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

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SWCHC is committed to empower people to improve their community by removing barriers to accessing our services ensuring that all of its communication, including information on its services and programs are accessible.

## REMOVAL OF SYSTEMIC BARRIERS

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SWCHC ensures that diversity is reflected in its board, staff, volunteers, students, interns and clients and actively seeks to addressing barriers to participation.

SWCHC makes education and training available to all staff, board members, volunteers, students and service users on discrimination, racism and oppression.

SWCHC has a permanent Health Equity committee which is responsible for recommending on-going education and training to the board, management team, and staff.

SWCHC takes steps to identify the changing realities and oppression in all systems and laws through inclusive consultation with the communities we serve, to identify the areas where we are failing them, and to advocate for changes that will serve the goal of ending racism and oppression in the lives of immigrants.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All board, staff, students and volunteers are responsible for actively supporting these principles and policy and creating an inclusive, respectful environment.

The **Executive Director** is responsible for ensuring that effective measures are put in place to support this policy; in particular, the Executive Director is responsible for:

- ensuring that SWCHC's programs and services are delivered within an anti-racist, Anti-Oppression framework, in conjunction with HR policies
- ensuring that mechanisms are in place to inform all new staff, volunteers, students and clients of this policy and the education and training provided
- ensuring that recruitment processes for staff and volunteers reach out to a diversity of potential candidates
- regularly reporting to the Board on the implementation of this policy, and promptly informing them of any issues related to the policy
- including Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression measures in the annual operation plan

Managers or Directors are responsible for:

- giving their employees the opportunity to participate in education and training
- informing all new staff, volunteers, students and clients in their area of this policy
- recruiting employees and volunteers from diverse backgrounds

\* For detailed procedures please consult the SWCHC HR and Volunteer policies which have specific guidelines and procedures on areas such as employment, recruitment and harassment.

### Glossary of Terms:

Access: "the right or opportunity to reach, use, or visit; admittance". (Oxford Dictionary, 9th edition)

Accommodation: The legal duty under the Ontario Human Rights Code to consider the needs of persons with disabilities up-front. This means designing for buildings, processes, programs or services inclusively. If existing physical structures, systems, or attitudes create barriers, they must be removed. Where it is impossible to remove barriers without undue hardship, special arrangements must be made so that persons with disabilities can fully participate.

Anti-Racism: The practice of identifying, challenging, preventing, eliminating, and changing the values, structures, policies, programs, practices, and behaviours that perpetuate racism.

Culture: Totality of ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge, norms, communication styles and way of life of a group of individuals who share certain ethnic, historical, linguistic, racial, religious and social background. Culture is a complex and dynamic organization of meaning, knowledge, artifacts and symbols that guide human behaviour. It accounts for shared patterns of thoughts and action, and contributes to human, social and physical survival.

Cultural Diversity: Diversity is a broad term that refers to the variety of differences among people. Often used within the context of culture, education, organizations or workplaces it is used to refer to differences among individuals and groups. Diversity is commonly understood in terms of dimensions that include, but are not limited to race, age, place of origin, religion, ancestry, skin colour, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, disability/ability, marital, parental or family status, same-sex partnership status, gender identity, creed, educational background, literacy level, geographic location, income level, cultural tradition and work experience.

Discrimination: The manifestation of prejudice. The granting and/or denying of civil liberties and opportunity to individual or groups with respect to access to services, goods and facilities, education, employment, and health care. Discrimination may occur on the basis of age, developmental or mental disability, ethnicity, gender, marital or family status, nationality, physical, race, religious or political affiliation, or sexual orientation. Discrimination becomes more blatant when two or more factors (e.g. economic status, class and/or racial visibility) coincide. This behaviour results in minorities being maltreated/mistreated or excluded.

Equality: Treating people the same based on the assumption that everyone is the same and has the same needs.

Equity: Treating people differently based on their different needs in order to ensure their equality of access.

Gender Identity: Gender Identity is an individual's own understanding of themselves in terms of being male or female, man or woman, or something other or in-between. An individual's gender identity has nothing to do with their genitalia or chromosomes.

Identity: A subjective sense of coherence, consistency, and continuity of self, based in both personal and group history.

Institutions: Organizational arrangements and practices through which collective actions are taken (e.g. corporations, criminal justice system, education system, health care system, government, religious communities, and others).

Integration: The process that allows groups and persons to become full participating members in the cultural, economic, political and social life of a society while at the same time permitting them to maintain their own cultural identity. This term refers to the renegotiation of a more equitable power sharing equation in the society.

Intersectionality: The concept of 'intersectionality' has been defined as "intersectional oppression [that] arises out of the combination of various oppressions which, together, produce something unique and distinct from any one form of discrimination standing alone."

Marginalization: Behaviours, actions, policies, and social institutions that serve to keep various forms of power and privilege away from specific individuals and groups. Denying individuals and groups access to educational, social, legal, and economic resources ensures that they remain "on the margin" or disadvantaged.

Oppression: The subjugation of others by the unjust use of force or authority using cultural, economic, physical, psychological, or social threats or force, and frequently using an explicit ideology to justify the oppression; also, the suppression of the natural self-expression and emotions of others.

Prejudice: A frame of mind that tends to prejudge a person or a group unfavourably by attributing to every member of a group characteristics falsely attributed to the group as a whole. These unfavourable assumptions are frequently not recognized as such because of the frequency with which they are widely accepted, and are used to justify acts of discrimination.

Privilege: Defined as a special right, advantage, benefit or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group of people. Privilege assigns dominance simply based on race, sexuality, or gender, among other factors of identity.

Race: A category used to classify large groups of people according to common ancestry and reliant on differentiation by distinctive hereditary physical characteristics such as colour of skin and eyes, hair texture, stature, and facial features. These differences and similarities in biological traits are deemed by society to be socially significant, meaning that people treat other people differently because of them. For

instance, while differences and similarities in eye color have not been treated as socially significant, differences and similarities in skin color have.

**Racialization:** Racial identities are not fixed categories. They are shaped by history, nationality, gender, class, and identity politics, and racial designations often differ from country to country. The term “racialization” makes explicit that this is not about inherent characteristics but about the ways in which we are socialized to differentiate groups of people on the basis of physical characteristics. It emphasizes the active process of categorizing people while at the same time rejecting “race” as a scientific category.

**Racism:** An action or practice by individuals or institutions which subordinate individuals and groups because of their race, colour or ethnicity. Racism is a form of discrimination and combines power and prejudice, whether it is social, economic, or political, to the advantage of one group, a dominant group, and to the disadvantage of another, a non-dominant group. Racism is manifested within organizational and institutional structures and programs as well as within individual thought or behaviour patterns.

**Sexism:** Any action, attitude, behaviour or language that depicts women as inferior. Sexism is both discrimination based on gender and the attitudes, stereotypes, and the cultural elements that promote this discrimination.

**Social Class:** The hierarchical order of a society based on such indicators of social rank as: education, family, income, occupation, ownership of property, etc.

**Social Justice:** A concept based upon the belief that every individual and group within a given society has a right to civil liberties, equal opportunity, fairness, and participation in the educational, economic, institutional, social and moral freedoms and responsibilities valued by the community.