

Policy:	Equity and Inclusion
Policy Number:	1.5
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Approved By:	Board of Directors

POLICY

Family Service Toronto (FST) was founded in 1914 as the Neighbourhood Workers Association (NWA) to advocate against poverty and to provide relief to vulnerable and marginalized families and communities. The NWA was central in the organization and development of social welfare programs in the city of Toronto.

FST is committed to building an organization and community which is equitable and inclusive. This means that in all aspects of its operations and at all levels of the organization, FST works to ensure that there is no discrimination on the basis of, but not limited to, ethnicity, language, race, age, ability (including intellectual and developmental disabilities) sex, sexual or gender identity, sexual orientation, family status, income, immigrant or refugee status¹, nationality, place of birth, generational status², political or religious affiliation. FST is committed to celebrating diversity, pursuing equity and practicing inclusion utilizing decolonization concepts.

FST achieves this through our understanding of poverty and the harmful effects of colonization, marginalization, discrimination and oppression. FST recognizes that the increasing diversity among residents in Toronto has added cultural, social and economic benefits to our community. At the same time, it can bring complexity to the equity diversity and inclusion journey. FST is also sensitive to the fact that oppressed groups experience marginalization and encounter barriers to full access and participation in the community. FST seeks to increase access and participation, especially for those who are marginalized, disadvantaged or oppressed.

FST encourages individuals to participate fully and to have complete access to its services, employment, governance structures³ and volunteer opportunities. It shall make every effort to see that its structure, policies and systems reflect all aspects of the total community and to promote equal access to all. To this end, FST strives to ensure that:

- Discriminatory or oppressive behaviours are not tolerated;
- Individuals who engage with FST for service are valued participants who have opportunities to shape and evaluate our programs;

¹ FST recognizes that barriers to employment and services may exist due to immigration or refugee status based on legislation and/or contractual funding obligations.

² Generational status is intended to protect individuals with Canadian citizenship who are first, second or third generation immigrants from discrimination.

³ FST governance structures include: the board of directors, committees of the board and any board working groups that may be convened.

- Community programs and services are developed and delivered to give priority to individuals in marginalized communities and are sensitive to the needs of diverse groups;
- Programs are delivered in such a way that systemic barriers to full participation and access are identified and eliminated;
- Services are provided with sensitivity to the influence of power and privilege in all relationships, including service relationships, and are delivered in keeping with principles of justice and decolonizing practice;
- Programs are developed and delivered using a strengths-based and trauma informed approach in a manner that is accessible to service users;
- Communication materials present a positive and balanced portrayal of people's diverse experiences.

This policy is intended to act as a positive force for equity and the elimination of oppression.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all FST service users and personnel (employees, volunteers and students).

PROCEDURES

1. FST has and will continue to work to embed the principles detailed in this policy within all relevant FST policies and procedures to ensure that equity and inclusion guides FST in all its endeavours.
2. Individuals who believe that they have experienced harassment or discrimination in an FST context are encouraged to use the following policies and procedures to have their concerns or complaints addressed:
 - Clients and community members may refer to the *Service User and Community Member Complaints* policy
 - Employees, volunteers and students may refer to the *Harassment and Discrimination* policy
 - Unionized employees may elect to use the *Harassment/Discrimination* provisions of the *Collective Agreement*
3. FST personnel may also refer to the *Discriminatory Requests for Service* policy for guidance in addressing service users or community members who make such requests.