



Intent

Diversity and inclusion are fundamental values of Forward House. As a not-for-profit provider, we are committed to a workplace culture that values and promotes diversity, inclusion and equal employment opportunities.

That culture includes:

- Promoting diversity by identifying and removing barriers in recruitment, advancement and retention for underrepresented groups. These groups may include women, people of color, Indigenous individuals, individuals with a disability and LGBTQ2+ individuals, and any additional groups identified through ongoing review.
- Preventing discrimination by making decisions regarding recruitment, advancement, compensation and workplace opportunities without regard for race, colour, age, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, physical abilities and any other categories protected under human rights legislation.
- Promoting respectfulness, cultural awareness, and inclusivity by:
 - Fostering a collaborative work environment in which all employees participate and contribute;
 - empowering and providing a safe space for all employees to express themselves, exchange ideas, and feel heard; and
 - encouraging employees to be open and curious about others; experiences and perspectives.
 - Respecting employee privacy in collection, use and disclosure of any information about employee personal characteristics.
 - Reducing barriers to services, and fostering an inclusive environment where individuals, families, staff, and volunteers feel respected and valued.

Definitions

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are social concepts that are constantly evolving. In this policy, they have the following meaning:

Diversity refers to variety in characteristics that we all possess, and which are used to differentiate among individuals and groups of people. Those characteristics include race, colour, age, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, physical abilities and other categories protected under human rights legislation. Diversity also includes differences in backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, thoughts, interests, and ideas.

Equity is the intentional and proactive effort to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent full participation in organizational programs, services, and employment opportunities, recognizing individuals may require different supports to achieve comparable outcomes.

Inclusion is the practice of accepting, respecting and valuing diversity. An inclusive work culture is one which ensures all employees are valued, heard, engaged, and involved at work and have full opportunities to collaborate, contribute, and grow professionally.

All leaders, managers, and employees play a role in making Forward House a diverse and inclusive place to work for everyone. Please read this policy carefully and openly and make every effort to understand the importance of diversity and inclusion and the ways we can accomplish these objectives together.

Organizational Commitments

Forward House is committed to developing and implementing programs and initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion in all areas of employment.

Leadership is responsible for:

- modelling inclusive behaviour;
- integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into decision-making processes;
- supporting accommodation and accessibility initiatives;
- setting and monitoring diversity, equity, and inclusion objectives;
- collecting and considering feedback from staff and stakeholders to improve organizational practices;
- fostering a culturally competent workforce by providing comprehensive training on diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- responding promptly and appropriately to concerns raised under this policy; and
- promoting accountability within their areas of responsibility.

All individuals covered by this policy are expected to:

- treat others with dignity, professionalism and respect;
- contribute to an inclusive and welcoming environment;
- refrain from discrimination, harassment, bullying and exclusionary conduct;
- support trauma informed and culturally responsive practices;
- participate in required training and educational opportunities;
- report concerns or conduct that may be inconsistent with this policy; and
- cooperate in investigations conducted under this policy.

Forward House recognizes we must continue to challenge ourselves to ensure these values are upheld. Forward House is committed to evaluating existing programs and adapting or introducing new initiatives as our diversity and inclusion goals evolve.

Commitment to Clients

Forward House provides services that respect the dignity, identity and cultural backgrounds of all individuals. This commitment includes:

- Providing information, documentation, and written agreements (such as consent forms, Individual Support Plans (ISPs), service agreements, and policies) in the individual's preferred language whenever possible;
- Supporting access to interpretation or translation services where required
- Respecting cultural traditions, customs, and practices in care planning and daily support;
- Ensuring communication methods are accessible and appropriate to the individual's and preferences; and,
- Promoting equitable access to programs, services, and opportunities.

Forward House is committed to continuous learning and improvement in the area of diversity and inclusion. Employees receive ongoing training to enhance cultural competence and to ensure all individuals feel valued, understood, and supported in a manner that upholds their rights and promotes their full participation in the community.

Equitable Opportunity in Employment

Employment decisions at Forward House will be based on qualifications, performance, and organizational needs.

All employees will have fair access to:

- Recruitment opportunities;
- Promotions and career development; and
- Training and organizational programs.

Inclusive Recruitment

Forward House is committed to fair and accessible hiring processes. Recruitment practices will:

- Encourage applicants from equity seeking groups;
- Use inclusive and accessible job postings;
- Ensure equitable interview processes; and,
- Offer reasonable accommodations to candidates when required.

Where possible, diverse perspectives will be included in the recruitment process.

Changes to this Policy

Forward House will maintain and revise this Diversity and Inclusion Policy as required to advance diversity and inclusion goals.