

**ANTI-RACISM ANTI-OPPRESSION POLICY**

Policy Number: <b>06</b>	Effective: <b>April 1, 2006</b>
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**Immigrant Women Services Ottawa Mandate**

- To empower immigrant and visible minority women in the City of Ottawa to participate in the elimination of all forms of abuse against women.
- To provide a culturally responsive crisis counselling service and a language interpretation service which will facilitate an abused woman’s accessibility to community and mainstream services.
- To provide other services and/or programs which will assist immigrant women in their journey to attain their full potential.

**Statement of Principles**

IWSO recognizes the intrinsic value of culture and believes that cultural diversity is a source of enrichment and strength.

IWSO believes that every woman and child is unique and must be treated with respect and equity. That every woman and child has the inherent right to social and economic justice and that every woman and child has the right to self determination and a right to contribute to society in her/his own way.

IWSO recognizes that all women face misogyny and sexism; however some bear an additional burden of oppression due to racism and other forms of discrimination.

IWSO recognizes that all members of non-dominant racial and ethno-cultural groups suffer from racism and systemic discrimination.

IWSO recognizes that each group experiences discrimination and racism differently depending on the history of each group, the power and privilege it holds, and how visible its members differ from the dominant group in Canada.

IWSO’s analysis of racism recognizes the dynamics of power and privilege and how these tools serve to perpetuate racial oppression in society.

## **Policy**

IWSO's analysis and framework is shaped by a feminist, anti-racist, anti-oppression approach, which means we understand society as being fundamentally based on patriarchal social relations as well as by racism and multiple other forms of oppression on the basis of: class, age, sexual orientation, disability, gender identification, colour, place of origin, ethnic origin, citizenship, religion, political affiliation, record of offences, marital status, family status, life experiences and appearance. Our analysis also highlights the complexity of dominant power relations, including the ways these multiple forms of oppression intersect and work together, to create differential impacts and diverse needs and issues for different groups of women.

Systemic racism, discrimination, and oppression based on race, class, sexual orientation, gender identification, age, and ability must be addressed as part of an integrated approach to addressing issues of poverty, violence, homelessness and oppression in the lives of women and children.

IWSO is an anti-racist organization that questions and rejects the status quo, challenges existing power relations and believes that racism can and should be eradicated.

IWSO will take a pro-active organizational stance in the struggle against racism and oppression will reflect this commitment both internally and externally.

IWSO will ensure that all Board members, staff, volunteers, students and clients adhere to these principles and policy.

IWSO's programs and services will be delivered within an anti-racist, anti-oppression framework.

IWSO acknowledges that racism and oppression exist and takes responsibility for learning and change. IWSO will provide education and training to all staff, volunteers, students and service users on racism and oppression.

IWSO will have a standing staff Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression committee which will be responsible for ensuring on-going education and training, the execution of service and program components of IWSO Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Implementation Plan, and maintaining a critical review of agency policies and procedures.

IWSO will have a standing Board Social Justice and Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression committee which will be responsible for ensuring on-going education and training for Board members, the execution of all aspects of IWSO's Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Implementation Plan, and maintaining a critical review of agency policies. This Committee can be the Program and Policy Committee or a separate entity.

IWSO will ensure that diversity is reflected in the board, staff, volunteers, students and clients and actively seek to eliminate barriers to participation.

*IWSO will not tolerate racism or discrimination in any form by staff, board, volunteers, students or users of IWSO services. IWSO will inform all the above parties of their rights and responsibilities outlined in this policy.*

### **Strategies for Change**

Board, staff and volunteers will be active in the strategies for change. Work will be based on our organization's mission and informed by the work we do with women and children in our programs and services. The women with whom we work will be included in all aspects of the work we do in ending racism and oppression.

We will ensure that in all the work in which we are involved, we bring to the discussion a feminist, anti-racist, anti-oppression framework for action. We will maintain active involvement in anti-racist, anti-oppression social change work.

We will actively lobby the municipal, provincial and federal governments to provide proper funding for programs that address racism and oppression and that serve communities that are marginalized.

The methods we will use to effect social change may include participation in coalitions, public education and media campaigns, and direct political action such as participation in protests and rallies, deputations, complaints and refusals to participate in government programs that contribute to systemic oppression.

We will respond with programs and services that meet the needs of the diversity of women and children who have experienced oppression. All services will be delivered from a feminist, anti-racist/anti-oppression framework. Programs and services will address the diverse needs of women and assist them in strengthening their economic and social position so as to enable them to protect and support themselves and their children.

We will continue to identify the changing realities and oppression in all systems and laws through inclusive consultation with the women and children we serve, to identify the areas where they are failing women and children, and to advocate for changes that will serve the goal of ending racism and oppression in the lives of women and children.

### **Complaint Policy**

IWSO will treat all complaints seriously and sensitively. All investigations will be handled in a manner that respects the confidentiality of the complainant(s), witnesses and the alleged offender(s). Any interference with an investigation including intimidating or coaching of a complainant or witness will not be tolerated.

**The procedures outlined below do not affect the individual's right to file a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission.**

## **Complaint Procedure**

### **Step 1**

1. The complainant and/or witness will ask the alleged offender to stop her behaviour immediately, outlining the offensive conduct. The alleged offender should be reminded that such behaviour is not tolerated. The complainant has the right to ask a third party to speak to the alleged offender on her behalf.
2. Any witness (es) to the incident should intervene immediately. In all cases, the witness does not have the option not to respond to incidents.
3. The alleged offender must be given an opportunity to stop the behaviour and offer reparation(s) to the complainant.
4. The complainant and/or witnesses shall make a written record of the incident, including dates, times, locations and a detailed account of the incident and forward this to the Executive Director or her designate.
5. Should the alleged offender not offer reparation or the incident is of such a nature that this is not acceptable action will be taken including appropriate disciplinary action of staff, board, volunteers and in the case of service users discharge from IWSOs services.
6. The complainant has the right to go directly to Step 2.

### **Step 2**

1. A written complaint shall be forwarded to the Executive Director.
2. The Executive Director shall review and investigate the complaint within 10 working days.
3. The alleged offender(s) have the right to be made aware of the allegations against them and respond to the complaint in writing.
4. The Executive Director, upon review and investigation will summarize the findings and take appropriate action.
5. The complainant(s) will be met with and a copy of the written resolution provided.
6. A report will be forwarded to the Board that documents the resolution of the complaint.

### **Step 3**

1. Where the resolution of a complaint is not satisfactory to the complainant(s) or the complaint is directly with the Executive Director a written complaint should be forwarded directly to the Board of Directors.
2. The Board of Directors shall retain a community race relations consultant to investigate and resolve the complaint.
3. The written findings and action taken to resolve the complaint will be documented

Both the complainant(s) and alleged offender will be met with and a copy of the written resolution provided.

## ANNEX 1

### Definitions

**Ableism** is a set of practices and beliefs that assign inferior value and worth to people who have developmental, emotional, physical or psychiatric disabilities.

**Ageism** is discrimination of individuals based on their age. For instance, discrimination of senior aged women based on the notion that they are incapable of performing certain functions such as driving, or discrimination of youth based on the notion that they are immature and therefore incapable of performing certain tasks.

**Anti-racism:** A process that acknowledges the existence of systemic racism and, through policies and practices, seeks to actively identify, challenge and end systemic racism in all its various forms.

**Anti-Semitism** is hatred of and hostility towards Jewish people.

**Classism** is discrimination of groups of persons sharing a similar social position and certain economic, political, and cultural characteristics.

**Discrimination** is behaviour based on prejudiced feelings and attitudes that lead to differential and unfavourable treatment of persons based on factors such as sex, race, culture, class, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identification and disability. Discrimination can be systemic and refers to the pervasive structures and practices that exclude groups on the basis of race, ethnicity and/or other forms of oppression. Incidents of oppressive conduct include but are not limited to: unwelcome remarks, jokes, slurs, innuendoes, name calling, stereotyping, graffiti, insults or taunting about a person's racial, ethnic, cultural, religious or social background, threats, intimidation, avoidance, or exclusion, display of racist, derogatory or offensive material, any comment or conduct that is unsolicited and known or ought to be known to be unwelcome and is likely to cause offense or humiliation. Discrimination may be intentional or unintentional, verbal or nonverbal, subtle, passive or overt in nature.

**Feminism** is a range of contemporary theoretical perspectives in which women's experiences are examined in relation to actual and perceived differences between the power and status of men and women. It includes a social justice movement in which issues of particular importance for women (eg domestic violence, pay equity, and globalization) are analyzed, understood, and addressed from feminist perspectives. Feminism is rooted in the belief that women and men are, and have been, treated differently by our society, and that women have frequently and systematically been unable to participate fully in all social arenas and institutions. This gives a "new" point-of-view on society, when eliminating old assumptions about why things are the way they are, and looking at it from the perspective that women are not inferior and men are not "the norm."

**Heterosexism** relates to social structures and practices which serve to elevate and enforce heterosexuality while subordinating or suppressing other sexual orientations.

**Oppression** is the subjugation of others by the unjust use of force or authority. It is the suppression of the natural self-expression and emotions of others.

**Prejudice:** A frame of mind that tends to prejudice a person, or a group, unfavorably, by attributing to every member of group characteristics falsely attributed to the groups 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** is the power and advantage that benefit a group, derived from the historical oppression and exploitation of other groups.

**Racism** is an action or practices by individuals or institutions which subordinates individuals and groups because of their race, colour or ethnicity. Racism is a form of discrimination and combines power and prejudice, whether it's social, economic or political, to the advantage of one group, a dominant group, and to the disadvantage of another, a non-dominant group. It is attitudinal and institutional.

**Sexism** includes any action, attitude, behaviour or language that depicts women as inferior. It is attitudinal and institutional.

**Transphobia** is the negative valuing, stereotyping and discriminatory treatment of individuals who do not conform in appearance and/or identify to conventional conceptions of gender.