



**IMMIGRANT WOMEN SERVICES OTTAWA
BOARD GOVERNANCE MANUAL**



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Appendix 1: Constitution and By-Laws

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1. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Immigrant Women Services Ottawa, formerly known as Immigrant and Visible Minority Women Against Abuse, came into existence in March 1987, as a result of a presentation by staff of the Immigrant Women's Program of the Ottawa Carleton Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO), to the Regional Coordinating Committee on Wife Abuse.

A project entitled "Project to Help Assaulted Immigrant Women" was developed in 1988 by the Committee. The major components of this project were: Public Education, Research, Networking and Organizational Development.

In 1989, an integrated model of Crisis Support Service and a Language Interpretation Service were developed.

IWSO continues to grow and has since added other services and programs e.g. Employment Services, Job Search Workshops and the Children Who Witness Violence Program.

At the 2002 Annual General Meeting, the name of the agency was changed from Immigrant and Visible Minority Women Against Abuse to Immigrant Women Services Ottawa. At the same time modest changes were made to the objects of the organization.



2. LETTERS PATENT (LEGAL ENTITY)

IWSO is incorporated as a non-profit organization. The goals and objectives of the incorporation are listed in the objects of the Letters Patent.



3. CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS (SEE APPENDIX A)

The Constitution and By-Laws outline the governance structure of the corporation, and define how decisions are made. Amendments to the By-Laws must be approved by the Board and ratified at an Annual General Meeting.



4. MISSION AND MANDATE

MISSION

Immigrant Women Services Ottawa (IWSO) exists to provide immigrant and visible minority women and their families in the City of Ottawa and the surrounding area, with the supports and tools to achieve their full potential as members of Canadian society and participate in the elimination of all forms of abuse against women and children.

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 access 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



5. OBJECTIVES

As per the approved By-Laws

The primary objectives are to:

1. Raise awareness among immigrant women who are affected by abuse, in order to enable them to break their isolation and advocate on their behalf.
2. Deliver a crisis counseling and support service for immigrant women who are abused.
3. Provide a language interpretation service to assist immigrant women to access the full range of community and mainstream services.
4. Provide other services and/or programs that will assist immigrant women in their journey to attain their full potential.
5. Provide sensitivity training for service providers and agencies regarding the needs of immigrant women in order to ensure that existing services are accessible and appropriate to immigrant women and their families.
6. Work with immigrant and other communities on education on violence against women and encourage and support them to take responsibility for their continuing education on this issue.
7. Build solidarity with abused women and encourage them to take collective actions towards ending violence against women.
8. Work with local, national and international organizations that share the goal of ending violence against women.



6. SERVICES, PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

CRISIS INTERVENTION

Crisis Intervention is provided to immigrant and visible minority women who are fleeing abuse. It helps clients deal with their immediate crisis and cope with the emotional confusion, pain, anger and stress that they are experiencing at the time. Crisis counsellors work with women to ensure their safety and the development of a safety plan. They then help clients make future plans with the IWSO counselling service or with other agencies and resources in the community.

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP COUNSELLING

Individual and Group Counselling

IWSO counsellors help immigrant and visible minority women victims/survivors of violence understand their painful experiences of abuse, and offer support as clients find solutions to end their pain. The counsellor assists clients to gain insights that allow for life changes; identify issues that are creating difficulties; use their inner resources to deal with the issues and achieve personal growth.

Support Groups

Support Groups provide a sharing and supportive environment for immigrant women who are experiencing or have experienced any kind of abuse such as: physical, verbal, emotional, financial or sexual. Groups meet one day per week for ten weeks. They provide information and support and allow women to express their feelings and to support each other.

Transitional and Housing Support Program

IWSO offers flexible services to immigrant women who have experienced violence, as they establish violence free lives in their community. We help women identify other supports they require to ensure their safety such as:

1. A safety plan
2. Assistance to find and maintain housing

Services for Children Who Witness Violence

Children who witness woman abuse in their homes experience learning difficulties at school, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger and stress. The service for children who witness violence offers individual and group counseling to children and their mothers.



EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Employment Services

IWSO provides immigrant and visible minority women with skills and tools to assist them in finding employment. Activities include individualized service or workshops where the women engage in activities such as resume writing and interview practice to help them prepare for the labour market.

This service is available to all women including Canadian citizens, landed immigrants and refugees.

Job Search Workshop

The Job Search Workshop provides job search training that is designed specifically for women newcomers. The workshop offers newcomers the tools needed to develop an individualized and effective action plan for a successful job hunt. The Workshops are FREE and are held over 3 days each month.

LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION SERVICES

Language Interpretation

IWSO language Interpretation service ensures accurate communication between Ottawa's legal, social, health, community agencies and their multilingual clients. Interpretation services are offered 24 hours per day and 7 days per week and include: face to face interpretation; message relay; telephone interpreting; and group interpretation.

The service is FREE for victims or violence. For other language interpretation services there is a fee.

Language Interpretation Training

IWSO provides Interpretation training to individuals with the skills, tools and knowledge to deliver a professional interpreter service. Trainees must be fluent in English and a second or third language and are required to pass a language test (ILSAT or CILISAT), before taking the training. There is a non-refundable fee of \$100.00* for the test and a payment of \$350.00* for the 100 hour training program.

Translation Service

Translation of documents is provided to individuals, agencies and service providers. This service is offered in a limited number of languages and is done by translators, some of whom are certified. Call IWSO at (613) 720-3145 for more information on the languages available for the translation service and the fee schedule.



Cross Cultural Education and Training

IWSO offers a training program for service providers to heighten their awareness to the cultural differences of immigrant and visible minority women and to work towards the provision of appropriate and accessible services.

Activities

- Community Outreach
- Presentations on Topical Issues
- Networking/Building Partnerships
- Advocacy and Liaison
- Marketing and Promotion

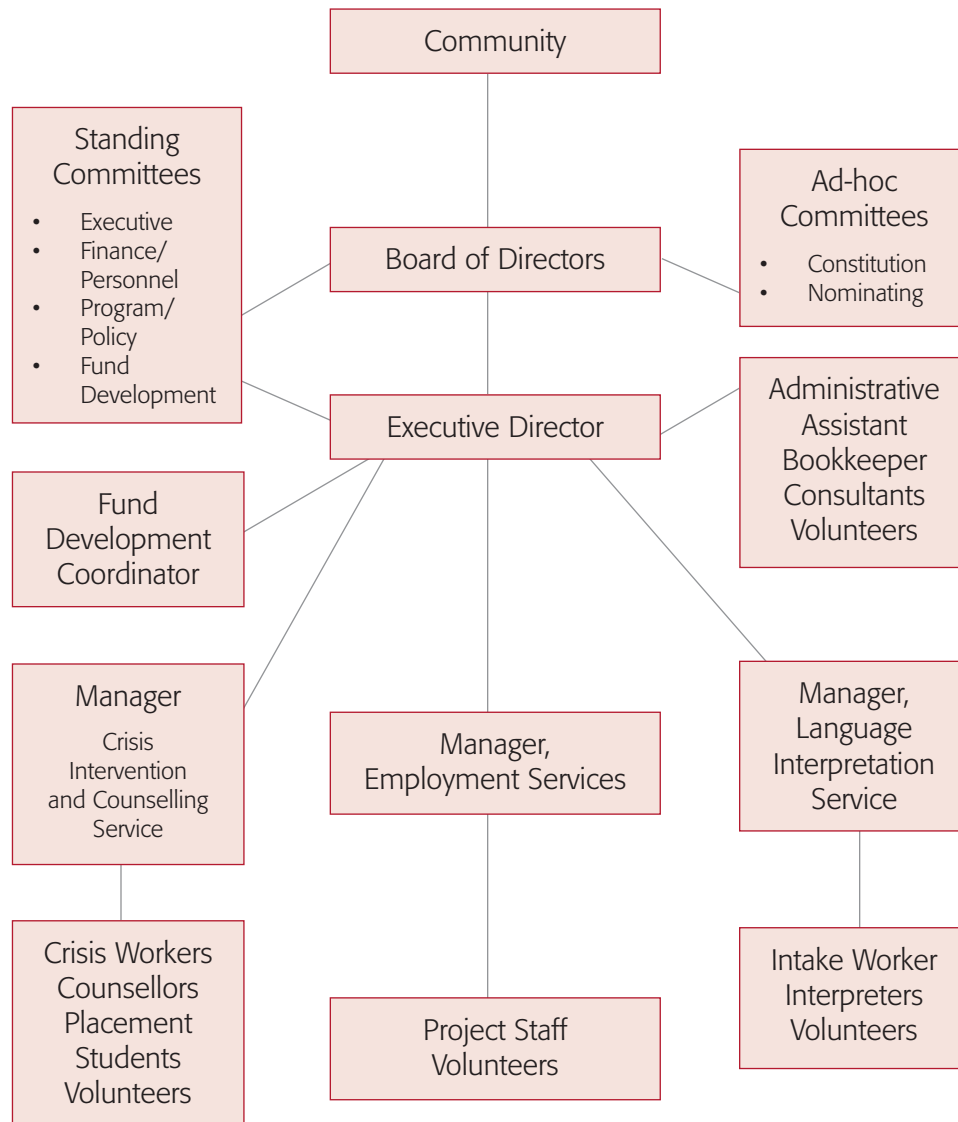


7. MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to all individual women who support the objectives of the Corporation. Membership is not transferable.



8. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



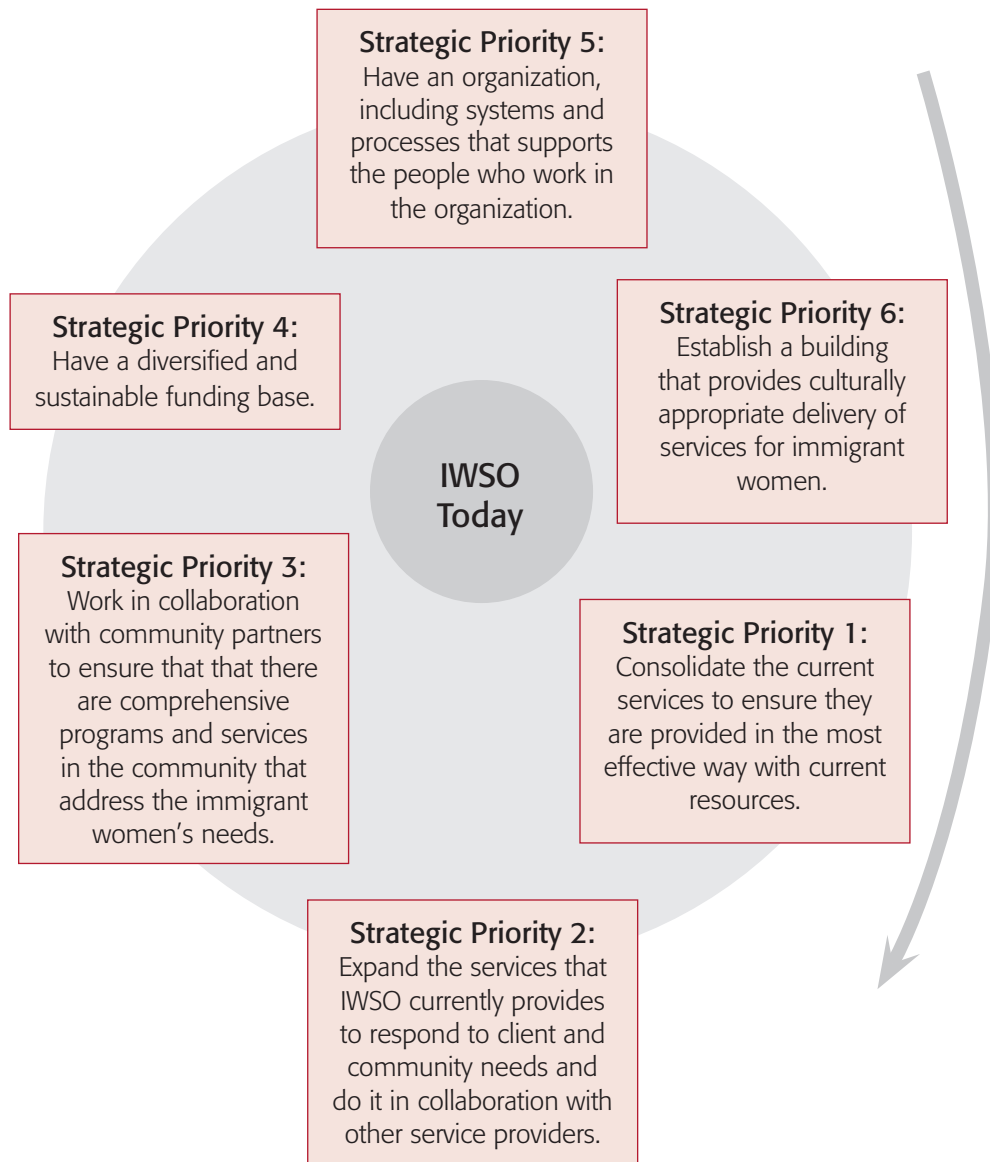


9. IWSO BOARD

NAME	POSITION	TERM
Joan Gullen	Life Member	Life
Marcia Carlyn	Chairperson	1 year
Jean Christie	Vice- Chairperson	1 year
Sabina Saeed	Treasurer	2 years
Lula Adam	Secretary	
Isobel Anderson	Member	2 years
Heidi Liu	Member	2 years
Mary Lee	Member	
Negar Ahtari	Member	2 years (On one year leave of absence)
Suzanne (Zan) Chandler Public Servant	Member	1 year
	Vacant	
	Vacant	



10. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (SEE APPENDIX B – 2007-10 STRATEGIC PLAN)





11. COMMUNICATION POLICY

IWSO POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE:	APPROVED BY:
July 14, 2006	• Board of Directors
LAST REVISED AND APPROVED:	

COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

IWSO communication objectives are to:

1. enhance the image of IWSO.
2. increase accessibility to IWSO's program and services through effective promotion
3. increase volunteer participation
4. increase public awareness of the role of IWSO in the community
5. support IWSOs fundraising efforts
6. in conjunction with community partners, increase public awareness of issues affecting immigrant and visible minority women experiencing abuse.

Communication Policy – General

1. IWSO communications ensure that the public receives information about IWSO's policies, procedures, programs and services and help to increase awareness of community issues. The Board, staff, volunteers and community are contributors to and recipients of, this information. All communications activities are conducted within the established decision-making structure of IWSO to ensure consistency in message and to reinforce our statement of mission, vision and strategic objectives.
2. IWSO communications activities include
 - a. research and analysis to examine the public environment affecting an issue;
 - b. advice to the Board and the Management team on policy development, program planning and implementation, and public issues;
 - c. planning to develop corporate and program communications plans;



- d. the application of the principles and practices of effective, ethical communications including regular evaluation of communications products, such as brochures and flyers; and
 - e. briefings and meetings with government officials, partners and the public.
3. IWSO's communications policy, strategies and activities will support the mission statement of IWSO.
4. Board, Staff, Volunteer and Client Roles
IWSO's communications responsibilities are organized using a centralized structure within which communications responsibilities are divided as follows:
 - a. The Board of Directors is responsible for overall communications policy and strategic planning, nurturing strategic relationships with sponsors, donors, partners and political leaders and lobbying activities. Board members will take a leadership role in lobbying and advocacy activities on behalf of IWSO. To assist the Board with these responsibilities, staff will provide information on emerging issues, changes to programs and services and other relevant information on a regular basis.
 - b. The Executive Director is responsible for implementation of the communications policy including procedures, communications strategies and products. As such, the Executive Director is normally the final authority on all communications, including publications, strategies/campaigns and news releases, although there may be instances, such as major fundraising initiatives, where the Board will be the final approving body. The Executive Director has the authority to delegate communications responsibilities, including sign-off authority, to others involved in specific initiatives. She will take the lead in coordinating communications activities.
 - c. Certain persons, due to their expertise, knowledge and /or communications skill, may be designated by the Executive Director as the Lead on a particular initiative or issue. Leads may include Board members, members of the management team, and others. This role is situation-specific, issue-specific and/or time-limited.
 - d. Contact with the public, partners and clients is a daily occurrence. We recognize that within the context of their specific roles, all Board members and staff are communication "Ambassadors" of IWSO and must be knowledgeable about IWSO, its programs and services.. However, there is one official spokesperson for the agency, the Executive Director or her designate.
 - e. Community volunteers, students on placement, and clients may be asked to assist in communications efforts, such as interviews with the media. While these people will not speak for or otherwise represent IWSO policy or services, they may assist by speaking about their experience, concerns or issues.



5. The Board Chair, Executive Director, and other leads identified above will, if necessary, periodically receive communications/media training to strengthen skills. Orientation sessions for Board and staff will include a review of the communications policies and procedures. All Board members and staff will receive current information on communications strategies and priorities, programs and services and appropriate communications products.
6. A regular review of communications strategies, activities and materials will be undertaken to ensure compatibility with organizational reviews or service developments that may be taking place and to monitor effectiveness.
7. All communications efforts will be undertaken within IWSO's operational budget or from funds allotted for that purpose in special grants.

Languages of Operation

While the language of operation at IWSO is English, IWSO provides services in many languages. Therefore, communications vehicles will reflect, as much as possible, our commitment to provide services in as many languages as possible.

Spokesperson

1. Regular day-to-day IWSO business
 - a. Board members may be asked by the Executive Director and the Chair of the Board to participate in discussions and information sessions with government officials, funders and others.
 - b. Board members and staff, in their role as representatives of IWSO, may be asked by the Executive Director to speak to community members and groups on behalf of the organization within their area of expertise/knowledge.
 - c. Media requests will be directed to the Executive Director, who will identify the person who will speak on behalf of WSO, and will identify appropriate information for distribution to the media. A timely response will be made to the media. If a person other than the Executive Director speaks to the media, a written report should be placed on file.
 - d. If Staff or Board members respond to a spontaneous or unplanned invitation to speak in the community for IWSO, they should inform the Executive Director as soon as possible. The Executive Director will determine if any follow up action is required.
2. Hot Issues and crises
 - a. "Hot issues" are those that could have a significant impact on the organiza-



tion, its objectives, its public support and/or well-being. The Executive Director, in close consultation with the Board Chair, is normally the spokesperson in the case of Hot Issues.

- b. "Crises" are defined as situations that may impact negatively on IWSO's image. The ED and/or the Board Chair will normally be the only spokespersons in these circumstances.
- c. On issues where IWSO staff and Board members have different points of view, only designated spokesperson(s) will speak on behalf of IWSO.
- d. When a Hot Issue or a Crisis occurs, staff will inform the person/media making a request for comment that they will forward the request to the Executive Director, who will determine who will respond and the manner of response.
- e. No Board members or staff will speak "off the record" to the community or the media.



12. ANTI-RACISM/ANTI-OPPRESSION POLICY

ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE:	APPROVED BY:
July 2005	• Board of Directors
LAST REVISED AND APPROVED:	

IMMIGRANT WOMENS SERVICES OTTAWA (IWSO) ANTI-RACISM ANTI-OPPRESSION POLICY

Immigrant Womens 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.)

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 is 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 is a frame of mind that tends to prejudice a person, or a group, unfavorably, by attributing to every member of a 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.

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 individuals 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.

July, 2005