



Title: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility	
Policy #: 2-117	Page #: 1 of 10
Effective: March 2024	
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1. Guiding Authority

- 1.1 [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.](#)
- 1.2 [Glossary of Terms - Diversity Equity and Inclusion Division.](#)
- 1.3 Reimagining Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Early Years Settings: Centring the Voices of Parents, Educators, and Community Members by Dr. Kerry-Ann Escayg.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA)** – A process of recognizing differences within groups of individuals and using this understanding to achieve substantive equality in all aspects of an individual’s life.
- 2.2 **Accessibility** – The degree of ease that something can be accessed, used and enjoyed by persons with disabilities. The term implies conscious planning, design and/or effort to make sure something is barrier-free for persons with disabilities.
- 2.3 **Anti-racism** - An active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional and systemic racism, as well as the oppression and injustice that racism causes.
- 2.4 **Cultural safety** – An outcome that focuses on how racialized people experience an environment, rather than simply the intent of those providing services. Culturally safe programs are created by ongoing respectful engagement that acknowledges and works to address power imbalances and systemic racism. A culturally safe environment is one free from racism and discrimination.
- 2.5 **Diversity** - Acceptance, respect and recognition of our differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs or other ideologies. It is about understanding and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within everyone.
- 2.6 **Equity** - Equity is a principle and process that promotes fair conditions for all persons to fully participate in society. It recognizes that while all people have the right to be treated equally, not all experience equal access to resources, opportunities or benefits. Achieving equality

does not necessarily mean treating individuals or groups in the same way but may require the use of specific measures to ensure fairness.

- 2.7 **Inclusion** - Acknowledging and valuing people's uniqueness to enrich the quality of life for everyone. All individuals have a sense of belonging, and acceptance, and are recognized as valued and contributing members of society.
- 2.8 **Oppression** – The use of power to disempower, marginalize, silence or otherwise subordinate one social group or category, often to further empower and/or privilege the oppressor.
- 2.9 **Social location** - The groups people belong to because of their place or position in history and society. All people have a social location that is defined by their gender, race, social class, age, ability, religion, sexual orientation and geographic location. Each group membership confers a certain set of social roles and rules, power and privilege (or lack of), which can heavily influence one's identity and how one sees the world.

3. Guiding Principles

- 3.1 All children have the right to learn, play and grow in an environment in which they feel welcome, safe, respected, and experience acceptance and belonging.
- 3.2 For children to reach their full potential, they need to see themselves represented as valued members of the child care community, in their learning materials and in the program content. They require safe reporting processes for acts of racism and educators trained to receive those reports with empathy and action-oriented responses.
- 3.3 All educators have the right to work in an environment that is welcoming, inclusive and free from discrimination, racism and harassment.
- 3.4 To create and maintain an environment free of racism and discrimination, educators and children must be empowered with tools to recognize and safely respond to racism and discrimination.
- 3.5 Anti-racist child care programs require collaboration and an ongoing commitment from all parties, including children, their families, staff and the organization itself. All parties must work together to create child care programs that refuse to tolerate racism.

4. Purpose

- 4.1 The purpose of this Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) policy is to outline the framework of the Region of Durham, Directly Operated Early Learning and Child Care programs (DOCs) to create and maintain an environment that is free from racism, discrimination, and discriminatory barriers or practices. It promotes inclusion, anti-racism, equity, respect and understanding. This policy applies to educators, children and their families.

5. Policy

- 5.1 The DOCs are committed to fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive learning environment that embraces anti-racism principles for all children. Our pedagogical approach recognizes the importance of providing a nurturing space that celebrates differences and promotes equal opportunities for all children, families and staff.
- 5.2 DOC staff (managers, supervisors, educators, etc.) will not tolerate, ignore or condone racism, discrimination or harassment of its staff, children or families of the child care programs.
- 5.3 The Regional Municipality of Durham Child Care and Early Years operating criteria states:
 - The Regional Municipality of Durham Child Care and Early Years Division is committed to an inclusive child care system that promotes positive and healthy environments for children. Inclusive child care means that quality services are provided for all children regardless of race, age, ability, language, culture, ethnicity or family structure.

6. Code of Conduct and Expectations

- 6.1 **Expectations for staff of Regional Early Learning and Child Care Centres (DOCs)**
 - Review the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility policy upon hiring, and annually thereafter.
 - Staff will be trained on how to identify incidents of racism, bias and exclusion in the room, how to address these incidents with the child(ren), and how to communicate with the family of the child(ren) who experienced and committed the unacceptable behaviour.
 - Partake in annual, mandatory DEIA training. Where possible, training will be developed and/or delivered in collaboration with those who have lived experience as a member of a protected group under the Ontario Human Rights Code, including people who identify as Black, Indigenous, racialized, disabled or a member of the 2SLGBTQI+ community.
 - Staff are encouraged to reflect on their privilege and biases to avoid making assumptions that can result in harmful and traumatic experiences for diverse children and their families.
 - Staff must provide an inclusive environment where all children feel a sense of belonging and support to reach their full potential. Staff will work in partnership with families and community partners to enhance their capacity to ensure diverse children, including children with special needs, feel safe and supported.
 - Staff are expected to collaborate with colleagues and management, fostering a culture of mutual respect, open communication, and teamwork to ensure a harmonious and inclusive work environment.
 - When disagreements arise between staff members or with management, staff are encouraged to resolve conflicts in a professional, respectful, and constructive manner.

- Staff are encouraged to engage with management to discuss opportunities for professional growth, including participating in DEIA training, leadership workshops, and mentorship programs that support diverse perspectives.
- Staff should maintain clear, respectful, and regular communication with families, providing updates on their child's development, addressing concerns, and sharing information about the child care program in an accessible and inclusive manner.
- Positive interactions between staff members, staff and families, and staff and children will be monitored through the Program Statement Monitoring Form on an ongoing basis and reviewed with staff annually or more frequently as needed to ensure a respectful, collaborative, and inclusive environment for all.
- Use inclusive language and avoid stereotypes or any form of discriminatory language.
- Staff should demonstrate awareness and respect for the diverse cultural backgrounds of families. This includes acknowledging and incorporating family values, religious practices, and traditions into the child's care plan where appropriate.
- All interactions with families should be conducted with professionalism, ensuring that staff treat families with dignity, avoiding biases, and maintaining a supportive and inclusive atmosphere for diverse family structures and experiences.
- Ensure every child receives equitable treatment, regardless of race, ethnicity, cultural background, identity or ability.
- Integrate diverse, inclusive, anti-biased programming into daily learnings through materials, interactions, toys and equipment.
- Complete an Individual Support Plan in collaboration with families and outside agencies as necessary to support children with special rights and abilities.
- Proactively set up spaces to accommodate the needs and abilities of all children (e.g., rooms are set up to accommodate wheelchairs, quiet areas are found in each room, etc.).
- Promptly intervene and address any incidents of teasing, bullying, racist or oppressive behaviour, inappropriate language or aggressive behaviour, and encourage open communication to report concerns without fear of judgment or reprisal.
- Address the child who has been the target of an incident(s) as the priority and provide them with the support they need.
- Follow up with the child who committed the offence to support their understanding that the behaviour was wrong and will not be tolerated.
- Actively and regularly engage with families to foster a collaborative approach in promoting anti-biased and anti-racist attitudes and practices.

- Continuously educate and support individuals in fostering an inclusive environment while vigilantly addressing discriminatory behaviour.
- Initiate formal meetings with families when behaviours arise that breach the code of conduct and collectively develop and implement a plan for success.
- Report incidents related to discrimination to management.
- Staff will follow the Corporate Employee Code of Conduct at all times.

6.2 Support for staff of Regional Early Learning and Child Care Centres

- All staff will have access to mental health support (Family Services Employee Assistance Program).
- All staff must be made aware of who they can consult if they find themselves in an unfamiliar situation and are uncertain of how to respond appropriately. Consultation may occur with (but is not limited to) their direct supervisor, the DOC program manager, and/or the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion department.
- All staff will have DEIA performance measures incorporated into their Feedback and Development reviews providing them with constructive feedback on their efforts to create an inclusive and equitable environment.
- Staff will be provided time to share experiences, challenges and strategies for incorporating DEIA practices in daily work through team building opportunities and team meetings.
- There will be scheduled reflection sessions built into staff meetings to encourage staff to think about their biases, interactions and any challenges they face in fostering an inclusive environment to ensure ongoing growth and self-awareness.
- Staff members will be provided support by management to work through any conflicts that may arise to focus on resolving issues before they escalate and/or provide them direction on where to seek further support where needed.

6.3 Expectations for families

- All families must review orientation materials that include a DEIA component.
- All families must treat DOC staff, children and other families with dignity and respect.
- All families must understand that oppressive and racist behaviour committed by a child or parent/caregiver violates the centre's policy and will not be tolerated.
- Use inclusive language and avoid stereotypes or any form of discriminatory language.
- Refrain from any type of bullying behaviours, including but not limited to name calling, racial slurs, discriminating against others, purposefully excluding others, and physically harming persons or property.

- Communicate with DOC staff and supervisors regularly to provide updates on their child's abilities, needs, cultural and religious beliefs, and behavioural changes.
- Receive feedback regarding their child with an open mind and present their case with respect and understanding.
- Participate in formal meetings when requested to create a success plan.
- Follow through with the success plan outside of the DOC to ensure consistency.
- Families are encouraged to participate in the development of the curriculum and to share cultural and family experiences.

6.4 **Support for families**

- All families interested in admission to a Regional Early Learning and Child Care Centre will be dealt with fairly and equitably.
- Staff must be prepared to support newcomer families to navigate the child care system and/or provide relevant resources. This may include providing information about additional community supports and services, fostering partnerships by working collaboratively and, with written consent, seeking and obtaining appropriate community support to meet the needs of all children.
- Any incidents of oppressive or racist behaviour will be communicated to parents/caregivers. The parent/caregiver of the child who experienced racism must be given the opportunity to feel both seen and heard. The parent/caregiver of the child who committed the behaviour must be aware that such behaviour violates centre policy and will not be tolerated.

6.5 **Expectations for children**

- Use inclusive language and avoid stereotypes or any form of discriminatory language.
- Treat each other with respect.
- Support each other through kindness.
- Refrain from any type of bullying behaviours, including but not limited to name calling, racial slurs, discriminating against others, purposefully excluding others, and physically harming persons or property.
- Treat all toys, equipment and materials with respect, including all other children's belongings.

6.6 **Support for children**

- Staff will create kindness-focused activities throughout their program, focusing on the diverse, individual needs of their children.
- Staff will model respectful behavior consistently, demonstrating the importance of treating others kindly and fairly.

- Staff will support children to express their emotions in a healthy way by using tools like emotion charts, self-regulation activities, books throughout the program etc. where they can take time to understand and discuss their feelings.
- Staff will integrate toys, books, and resources that represent various cultures, abilities, and backgrounds so children are constantly exposed to diversity in a positive way.
- Staff will organize activities where children and families are encouraged to share their family traditions, cultural practices, or unique interests to help children understand and respect the differences among their peers.
- Staff will intervene in real-time during conflicts to guide children in resolving issues respectfully where necessary.
- Staff will collaborate with families and outside agencies where necessary to provide additional supports in helping children to successfully participate in daily programming, completing Individual Support Plans where necessary.

7. Procedure

7.1 Responding to complaints of racism and discrimination

7.2 All families, including families with diverse identities, must be able to issue a complaint in an accessible and culturally safe manner without fear of retribution or discrimination.

7.3 A culturally safe, accessible space must be created to share their experience and to collect information about the complaint. At the DOCs, this space may be the office if it meets the needs of the families and staff.

7.4 Staff must listen respectfully to the complaint.

7.5 To protect privacy and foster respect, staff receiving the complaint must only share details of the complaint with relevant parties (i.e., the centre supervisor and/or manager, the individual the complaint is made against, and the parent/caregiver of the child(ren), if applicable).

7.6 Complaints must be responded to promptly. The party issuing the complaint must be updated regularly regarding the status of their complaint.

7.7 If a complaint is made, the staff member receiving the complaint must:

- Notify the supervisor and/or manager.
- Document the incident.
- Notify the families (both the family of the child experiencing the inappropriate behaviour and the family of the child that committed the behaviour).

7.8 If the behaviour continues, staff will seek support from the centre's Early Learning Inclusion Consultant (ELI), Children's Development and Behavioural Supports (CDBS), and any other applicable resources.

- 7.9 The continued occurrence of unacceptable behaviour may result in mandatory early pickup or, in severe cases, a break in service. Usually temporary, this break in service would give the centre time to ensure the necessary supports are in place to provide a safe and successful return to the program for the child. The family of the child would be expected to work with the supervisor and other supports and implement the recommendations.
- 7.10 If issues or concerns arise regarding the conduct outlined above, staff will strive to provide support to all families, which may include a break in service for children while collaborating with families and external agencies to implement safety measures. Families are expected to actively work with staff and seek necessary support for a successful return to care.
- 7.11 **Witnessing racism and/or discrimination in the child care program**
- 7.12 Staff must address racism, discrimination, stereotyping or exclusion by confronting disrespectful, unethical, oppressive, and/or racist remarks and behaviours.
- 7.13 Staff should take all the necessary steps to minimize the potential for harm and re-traumatization.

8. How to create culturally safe and inclusive spaces

- 8.1 To create culturally safe spaces, staff are encouraged to:
- Identify and engage with diverse families to understand and develop culturally safe spaces and practices.
 - Develop respectful and transparent relationships with diverse children and their families.
 - Maintain a safe space/area that is appropriate to meet with Black, racialized and Indigenous families, as well as any families who belong to a protected group under the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- 8.2 To create culturally welcoming and inclusive spaces, staff are encouraged to:
- Reflect on their personal values, assumptions, privilege and belief structures that inform their interactions with Black, racialized, Indigenous, disabled and other diverse individuals.
 - Be aware of stereotypes.
 - Display artwork from diverse communities represented in the child care program.
 - Use a traditional territorial acknowledgment of Indigenous Peoples when meeting in person or as an acknowledgment in email signatures.
 - Introduce themselves and explain their role within the organization.
 - Explain how the child care system works to ensure families understand the process and how to access services (community inclusion).
 - Demonstrate a willingness to be collaborative and flexible in the way the program is delivered, and how it can accommodate the diverse needs of all children.
 - Use open communication. Allow individuals to respectfully express concerns or feedback about the program and share their experiences without judgment or negative consequences.

- When sharing information with families, present the information in a physically, mentally and emotionally safe manner that ensures individuals understand what they receive. Families must have the opportunity to review and process the information, ask questions and, if necessary, have an appropriate support person of their choosing attend meetings to help with communication.
 - Take the time to get to know the children's families and show a genuine interest.
 - Treat all families with respect using kindness, empathy and understanding of social location.
 - Acknowledge individuals' lived experiences.
 - Respect cultural beliefs and lifestyles.
 - Safeguard individual's privacy and confidentiality.
- 8.3 To create culturally inclusive spaces for Indigenous families, staff are encouraged to apply the Two-Eyed Seeing concept, introduced by Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall. "Etuaptmunk, the Mi'kmaw word for two eyed seeing, the concept that with one eye, we view the world through Indigenous ways of knowing and with the other eye, we view the world through Western, or Eurocentric, ways of knowing".
- Two-Eyed Seeing is an Indigenous world view that is about being mindful or open to alternative ways of knowing, considering multiple perspectives and valuing individual differences when delivering services.
 - Staff are encouraged to look beyond their world views and consider Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, and to appreciate multiple perspectives.
 - Staff are encouraged to engage with Indigenous families and develop meaningful relationships.

9. DEIA in Regional Early Learning and Child Care Centres - Sustainability Plan

- 9.1 DEIA will be incorporated into family orientation materials.
- 9.2 The annual parent survey must include questions related to DEIA.
- 9.3 Programming at the DOCs will be assessed regularly and will incorporate feedback from staff, children and families.
- 9.4 DEIA must be a component of every staff meeting.
- 9.5 DOC staff meetings and events will begin with a land acknowledgement, acknowledging that the Region of Durham exists on lands that the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg inhabited for thousands of years before European colonization and recognizing Indigenous Peoples as rights holders and stewards of the land.
- 9.6 DEIA training will be an annual, mandatory requirement for all DOC staff.
- 9.7 Staff will be provided with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility resources to further their learning.

- 9.8 Where possible and appropriate, DOCs will incorporate the knowledge gained from the lived experiences of diverse individuals and communities into their policies, practices and trainings to improve policies and develop practices.
- 9.9 Managers of the DOCs will investigate coaching and mentoring opportunities for racialized and other diverse staff and build communities of practice opportunities for racialized and other diverse staff.

10. Internal Related Policies

The following related policies are available to internal staff:

- 10.1 [2-115 – Inclusion of all children](#)
- 10.2 [Corporate Harassment, Discrimination and Racism Policy](#)