EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION – EVERYONE IS WELCOME

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are more than just awareness or an initiative to us – they are principles. We strive for an inclusive and welcoming culture that encourages, supports, reflects, and celebrates the diverse voices of our clients, persons living with dementia, care partners, staff, students, volunteers, board members, and the communities we serve.

As we build a culture where inclusiveness is an automatic reflex, we want our clients, persons living with dementia, care partners, staff, students, volunteers, and board members to feel valued and appreciated for their diverse perspectives and lived experiences. As stated in our *Workplace Anti-Violence, and Discrimination and Harassment Policies*, the Alzheimer Society of Waterloo Wellington (ASWW) is committed to providing a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity.

Our equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts reflect ASWW's partnerships and community needs – our clients, persons living with dementia, care partners, staff, students, volunteers, board members, and our funders/donors. Ours goals are to:

1. Promote a welcoming environment and culture in which everyone knows that their unique characteristics, skills, and experiences are respected, valued, and celebrated. ASWW will seek input at all levels across the organization to identify barriers and obtain recommendations to eliminate them. ASWW will offer various events to ensure a healthy workplace environment to continue building a culturally safe environment.
2. Provide clients, persons living with dementia, and care partners with access to person-centered care and programs in a safe environment.
3. Consistently attempt to be broadly reflective of our community served with programming and services for clients, persons living with dementia, care partners, and the recruitment of staff, volunteers, and board members.
4. Engage and develop staff, volunteers, and board members in building the skills to work in an inclusive manner through resources identified in our training and education plans and as a service provider in the Ontario Health system. Training will align with *Ontario Health's Equity, Inclusion, Diversity, and Anti-Racism Framework.*
5. Provide an inclusive environment for donors and funders, where we seek to understand their diverse perspectives, communicate the impact of their giving, and deliver an experience that is meaningful to them.

Our dedicated efforts will result in a creative workforce and an enhanced experience for ASWW's clients, persons living with dementia, care partners, staff, students, volunteers, board members, partners, and the community we serve.

As stated by Ontario Health – "*A high-quality health care system starts with a culture that promotes equity and reduces disparities."*

Signed and dated at Waterloo Wellington, on the 31st day of May 2023,

Michelle Martin
Michelle Martin
Executive Director of the Alzheimer Society of Waterloo Wellington

RELATED DEFINITIONS

Human Rights Code
The Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination based on race, ancestry, place of origin, ethnic origin, citizenship, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, gender expression, disability, colour, creed, age, marital status, family status, reprisal, receipt of public assistance, record of offences and discrimination because of association.

Advocacy
Advocacy refers to ensuring that, both internally and externally, policies and services seek to eradicate systemic barriers that support oppression.

Ally
An ally is someone from a privileged group who is aware of how oppression works and struggles alongside members of an oppressed group to take action to end oppression. An ally does not put their own needs, interests, and goals ahead of the people they are working with; has self-awareness of their own identity, privilege, and role in challenging oppression; and is engaged in continual learning and reflection about various cultures and their history.

Anti-oppressive Practice
Anti-oppressive practice promotes equality and power sharing for all people. It challenges existing social relationships in which powerful groups maintain power and influence over less powerful groups. It includes specific practice behaviours and relationships that minimize power imbalances and promotes equity and empowerment for users of service.

Cultural Competency
Cultural competence is defined as a set of values, behaviors, attitudes, and practices within a system, organization, program or among individuals, which enables them to work effectively, cross culturally. Further, it refers to the ability to honor and respect the beliefs, language, interpersonal styles and behaviors of individuals and families receiving services, as well as staff who provide such services. Striving to achieve cultural competence is a dynamic, ongoing, developmental process that requires long-term commitment. Our focus on cultural competency includes but is not limited to race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, ability, religion, and language.

Diversity
The range of visible and invisible qualities, experiences and identities that shape who we are, how we think, how we engage with and how we are perceived by the world. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical or mental abilities, religious or spiritual beliefs, or political ideologies. They can also include differences such as personality, style, capabilities, and thought or perspectives.

Equity
Equity is an approach that ensures that everyone has the same opportunities to grow, develop and contribute. People are treated fairly and appropriately regardless of who they are, what they have, and where they live. This requires recognizing and addressing barriers to opportunities for all to thrive in our society.

Employment Equity
Encourages the selection, hiring, training, promotion, and retention of qualified and/or potentially qualified individuals. It ensures that barriers against persons in designated groups resulting from the organizational systems, policies and practices are identified and eliminated.

Inclusion
Inclusion is a sense of belonging, feeling respected and valued for individuality. The process of inclusion engages people by helping them feel valued and essential to the success of the organization. Inclusion is the degree to which an agency actively seeks, welcomes, and collaborates with its diverse community.

Privilege
Privilege is a special advantage or right that a person has that they didn't earn but have received because some part of their identity is valued in society. Different people hold different types and amounts of privilege, based on what society believes is valuable and good. Privilege often gives a person or group power over others.

Oppression
A system that gives certain groups power over others. On an individual level, oppression could be the sexist or racist beliefs and attitudes a person holds towards a group of people. On an institutional level it can be seen in the policies, laws, and customs that disadvantage groups of people for their race, sex, sexuality, etc. On a cultural level it can be seen in language, music, and art that reflect the belief that one social group is better than another.

Respect
Respect is the act of recognizing and valuing different views, values, orientations, histories, and cultures of diverse groups, while aligning with Human Rights legislation, the Centre's mission statement, Code of Conduct, and any other relevant agency policies.