



Rainbow Affinity Group Recommendations (2021 Learning Exchange)

Guiding questions for reviewing the recommendations:

How would all this get operationalized in our organization? Where do we start?

How would it be resourced?

What questions do we need to ask ourselves to make this clear and doable for our organizations?

What are we already doing?

What would progress look like? And how will we measure that?

Allyship & Responding to Harmful Incidents:

- Allyship must exist at all levels and the approach must be multi-pronged; including presentations/training to staff and management teams, educational sessions in agency programs, and within the union.
- Staff should be provided with tangible resources such as example statements, questions, tools for conversations and training on how to respond to different situations. Role playing training can be an effective tool to reinforce allyship and present staff concrete pathways to follow in responding to harmful incidents.
- When a harmful incident occurs, it should be addressed with a staff debrief in order to turn the incident into a learning moment.
- When advocating for the safety of staff or community members, their consent and confidentiality must always be considered.

Workplace Culture:

- Diversity at all levels of an organization (including management) is essential.
- Agencies must make their values clear during both the interviewing and onboarding processes.
- No agency can ensure safety 100% of the time; utilizing language such as “safer” or “braver spaces” (as opposed to “safe space”) better reflect this reality.
- Integrate regular meetings/check-ins into an agency’s schedule. These meetings should provide a space to address issues that have come up and should allow staff to safely speak about their experiences.
- Allow spaces for staff to communicate without the presence of management; this can create a safer and more honest environment in which staff members can seek out support from their peers.
- Spaces for communication, evaluation, and support should be expanded both within agencies and across organizations.
- Introduce tools to facilitate the transparent evaluation of management, while acknowledging the power imbalance to provide a trusting and safe environment for feedback.

Turning Policy into Practice:

- Policies and practices should be aligned with internal and external Anti-oppression statements.
- These anti-oppression policies must be consistently reflected in practice.
- 2SLGBTQIA+ training should be accessible to all staff regardless of their position and must have their varied schedules accommodated. In particular; staff working in shelters/drop-ins, with youth and children, reception, etc.
- When implementing new policies, make sure to integrate education and awareness to avert any resistance and support a clear understanding of responsibilities tied to legal and human rights. And in addition, connect expectations of work performance and behaviour of employees as being part of the values of the organization.
- Anti-oppression policies must integrate the safety of community members as well as the safety of staff.
- Supervisors, managers and senior leaders need to be actively engaged in this work and build their capacity to implement policies and practices in safe, appropriate and active ways.

Avenues for Conflict Mediation and Internal Complaints:

- Many staff do not feel safe bringing up issues about harassment and discrimination. It is important to cultivate trust and solidarity between staff and management who we recognize as most often wanting the same thing. It is important to encourage more privileged staff to use their power in the agency to speak up, with the consent of those they are speaking up for.
- There must be more than one avenue to bring up grievances; In some cases, the person one should be reporting to could be the person causing harm. Alternate avenues should be available.
- Allow staff to bring coworkers as support when addressing issues with management.
- In job descriptions and contracts responsibilities such as 'other duties as assigned' and 'including work assigned' should be avoided. This language is unclear and unspecific and can lead to unfair workload and position drift. This can both increase staff burnout, and also discourage staff members from addressing grievances. This also goes for part time and casual contracts.
- Union protocols regarding grievances can assist management and should be recognized and embraced. A union representative could be part of the onboarding process, instead of just HR. New employees should be provided the opportunity to be educated about agency protocols regarding grievances with a union representative.
- Conflict mediation and complaints processes should have clear action steps that include specific roles and responsibilities for both staff and management, as well as reasonable timelines.
- Employees should have access to information about their human rights and employment rights in the province of Ontario.

