

Statement of Policy:

FOCUS recognises the pervasive forces of institutionalised oppression and it seeks to challenge these forms of oppression by creating a safe space for community members and by means of community engagement. FOCUS strives to promote the values of inclusion respecting differences of ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental or physical capacity, age, religion, economic or social status, or political ideology and identity.

Implementation Strategies

FOCUS recognises that the implementation of an anti-oppression policy needs to happen on three levels; (A) at the Organisational level by applying the values of the policy to Organisational structures and practices; (B) personally through a commitment by staff, Board members and participants to further their own appreciation, analysis and commitment to the issues of anti-oppression and the goals of this policy and (C) through a conscious use of power in a way that empowers all stakeholders of the organisation.

A. Organisational strategies:

1. Commit time for Organisational discussions on discrimination and oppression;
2. Continually evaluate whether or not the goals of the policy are being met by the Organisation;
3. Promote an anti-oppression message and analysis in everything we do.
4. Commit to creating opportunities for staff, Board members and participants to improve their understanding of institutionalised oppression and to develop the skills to speak out about these issues;
5. Apply the principles of anti-oppression to programs activities and community events – by being aware of who tends to do what work, whose work gets recognised and whose work is supported;
6. Respect diversity in leadership and communication styles;
7. Make a collective commitment to hold people accountable for their behavior so that the organisation can be a safe and nurturing place for all;
8. Be conscious of how use of language may perpetuate oppression;
9. Respect different views and opinions.
10. Respect the individual's vision of their own identity.

B. Personal strategies:

11. Challenge yourself to be honest and open and take risks to address different forms of oppression head on;
12. When witnessing or experiencing an abuse of power or oppression, interrupt the behavior and address it on the spot or later, either one on one, or with colleagues. In order to encourage change, oppressive behaviour needs to be addressed and not ignored;
13. Challenge the behavior, not the person. Be sensitive and promote open dialogue;
14. Be aware of the tendency to generalise feelings, thoughts, behaviours, etc to a whole group;
15. Encourage people to take the responsibility for their behaviour;
16. Understand that confronting oppression, particularly internalised oppression, is difficult and demands work;
17. Acknowledge feelings of guilt, but feel responsible. Being part of the problem doesn't mean you can't be an active part of the solution;
18. Maintain these practices and contribute equal time and energy to building healthy relationships, both personal and political;

C. Use of Power

We strive to operate from a model of power-sharing and appropriate use of authority, and are mindful of using power in a way that empowers others and fulfils our mission.

Adopted by Board: 27 August 2021

Due for Review: 26 August 2023

Glossary (for terminology used within this policy to help learning and understanding for reader).

Discrimination - The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex. E.g. "victims of racial discrimination"

Oppression- Prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority.

Institutionalised Oppression- Institutional Oppression is the systematic mistreatment of people within a social identity group, supported and enforced by the society and its institutions, solely based on the person's membership in the social identity group.

Ethnicity- The fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition. Commonalities such as racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin may be used to describe someone's ethnicity. For example, while someone may say their race is "Black," their ethnicity might be Italian, or someone may say their race is "White," and their ethnicity is Irish.

Anti-Oppressive Practice – Is an approach to practice which seeks to reduce, undermine or eliminate discrimination and oppression, specifically in terms of challenging (racism, sexism, age-ism and disablism) encountered in practice (N. *Thompson 1992*)