

Children's Law Center of Minnesota:

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

I. Purpose.

Children's Law Center of Minnesota (CLC) is dedicated to greater diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging within its own organization and provides equal opportunity to people of all races, ethnicities, religions, genders, sexual orientations, gender identities, abilities, incomes, marital statuses, ages, philosophies, and veteran statuses in all levels of staff and governance.

CLC recognizes that it serves a diverse group of children and youth. We recognize the historically inequitable nature of the child welfare system and many other systems that our clients navigate on a daily basis. We also acknowledge the continuing legacy of inequity in the United States and understand that these forces continue to affect communities today.

CLC has therefore established a Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Working Group, which has created this DEI Action Plan. This DEI Action Plan and the overall principles of DEI will be a lens through which all actions at CLC should be considered. The DEI Action Plan will be updated as appropriate to promote continued growth and leadership in this area.

II. Specific Action Items.

A. Develop a DEI Mission Statement.

Just as the CLC has a general mission statement, the DEI Working Group recommends developing a DEI-specific mission statement to help crystalize our commitment to DEI in all aspects of the organization. The proposed mission language is as follows:

CLC will work to amplify our clients' voices through consistent and intentional engagement in DEI work and through fostering an awareness of diverse cultural and community backgrounds and understandings throughout all levels of CLC's organization. We will also work to address bias and barriers within all levels of CLC and within our hiring and staff retention processes to promote equality for all. As we work towards creating a more equitable and diverse organization, we recognize that a true commitment to diversity and equity is a continuous and intentional process.

We envision the DEI mission statement being used in the following ways/locations:

- Inclusion on the Board agenda for meetings (along with the general mission statement, which already appears on each agenda).
- Inclusion in grant applications.
- Prominent placement on the CLC website and as part of the employment application process for candidates to see.

- Incorporation into CLC's employment policies and as part of employee orientation and training.
- Website and Charities Review Council accreditation.

B. Implement Active Efforts to Diversify All Levels of the Organization.

One of the DEI Working Group's first actions upon creation in 2022 was to gather data about the demographics of the organization as it currently exists. This included reviewing diversity data of clients, which was historically collected, but also starting to collect this data from others affiliated with the organization. We added questions on the Board self-assessment asking Board members to voluntarily self-identify their race/ethnicity, sex, LGBTQ+ status, disability status, and military status. We recommend taking the following steps with regard to various groups within the organization:

- **Board:** Continue with the self-identification as part of the self-assessments to be able to gauge DEI progress over time. Reevaluate the current Board selection process to allow for a broader and potentially more diverse pool of applicants (e.g., posting for Board positions versus tap-on-the-shoulder at firms/corporations).
- **Staff Leadership:** The Executive Director, as the leader of the organization, will serve as an ambassador and champion for DEI issues. Further, as the leader of CLC, the Executive Director will demonstrate personal commitment to DEI by pursuing individual professional development on DEI topics.
- **Staff:** Incorporate voluntary self-identification questions for current staff and, in the future, as part of new employee onboarding (similar to with the Board). Include the DEI-specific mission statement in posting and recruiting for new positions. Staff will have internal opportunities for checking in on personal and team progress that furthers the goal of incorporating diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging into their work.
- **Volunteers:** Incorporate voluntary self-identification questions for new volunteers as part of initial volunteer training materials. CLC will consider ways to potentially obtain self-identification information from existing volunteers. The Volunteer Recruitment Committee reached out to local affinity bar groups in an effort to increase interest in volunteering with a more diverse attorney base. The following groups were contacted and will be contacted by the Volunteer Recruiting Committee going forward on an annual basis:
 - National Hispanic Bar Association
 - Minnesota American Indian Bar Association
 - Minnesota Black Women Lawyers Network
 - Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers
 - Minnesota Hispanic Bar Association

- Minnesota Lavender Bar Association
- Minnesota Asian Pacific Bar Association
- National Asian Pacific American Bar Association
- Hmong American Bar Association
- Korean American Bar Association of Minnesota
- Somali American Bar Association

In calendar year 2022, the Minnesota Lavender Bar Association and National Asian Pacific Bar Association provided the most substantive responses indicating interest in a partnership. We recommend affirmatively scheduling face time with these two organizations and continued contact with the other organizations, and going forward, to partnering specifically with any affinity groups that indicate an interest in partnership. We are also recommending DEI-specific training into new volunteer training (discussed further below).

C. Promote Increased DEI Awareness Within the Organization.

In addition to attempting to increase the diversity of CLC as a whole, the DEI Working Group feels strongly that we can and should make efforts to increase DEI skills and awareness of those already part of our organization. We recommend the following actions as applicable to the various groups within the organization:

- **Board:** Incorporate a 30- to 45-minute training into an upcoming Board meeting (before the end of 2022, and annually going forward) on implicit bias and/or other DEI topics as appropriate. Board training will also include information about CLC's clients and the diversity initiatives throughout CLC. Currently, all new Board members are supposed to attend volunteer attorney training before they can be on the Board; we recommend making that training *mandatory* in order to serve on the Board. As discussed below, we also recommend adding a DEI component into new volunteer training, so Board members would get training in that manner as well. Existing Board members should be encouraged to attend volunteer training (as many Board members are also CLC volunteers).¹
- **Staff:** Institute a mandatory training for all staff on implicit bias and/or other DEI topics on an annual basis, and support ongoing specific community-based training on topics related to clients that CLC serves (African-American, Indigenous, Hmong, Asian-American, Somali, Latinx, LGBTQ+, disability and trauma). Review and update anti-harassment, discrimination, and related policies to ensure that employees know how to report and are comfortable reporting any DEI-related concerns in the workplace.²

¹ Greene Espel will conduct the Board training for calendar year 2022.

² Greene Espel will conduct the staff training for calendar year 2022.

- **Volunteers:** Incorporate DEI-specific training into new volunteer attorney training. Hold an annual training on similar topics for existing volunteer attorneys that qualifies for Elimination of Bias CLE credit to increase attendance. Promote access to training opportunities for volunteers on topics related to clients that CLC serves by listing and communicating training sessions on CLC's website and through direct communications.

III. Accountability.

The DEI Working Group feels strongly the need to impress that DEI efforts are not a one-and-done or a check-the-box exercise. The DEI Working Group recommends that the DEI Working Group be responsible for ensuring that the above trainings occur on an annual basis. We also recommend that diversity demographics be reviewed at least every two years so that progress can be assessed and DEI efforts reevaluated as appropriate.