

Children's Law Center of Minnesota:

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

I. Purpose.

Children's Law Center of Minnesota (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 are dedicated to being strong and empathetic advocates for the group of children and youth we serve, and provide equal opportunity to people of all races, national origins, religions, genders, sexual orientations, gender identities, abilities, ages, all other classes protected by applicable law in all levels of staff and governance.

CLC has therefore established a Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Committee, and adopted 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. DEI Mission Statement.

CLC has adopted the following DEI Mission Statement:

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 recognize that a true commitment to understanding the systemic barriers and unique needs of the children and youth we serve is a continuous and intentional process so we can provide strong and empathetic advocates.

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, when applicable.
- 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 Engage Different Voices in 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 to determine whether the data suggested barriers to equal opportunity. This included reviewing diversity data of clients, which was historically collected, but also starting to collect this data from others affiliated with the organization. CLC has implemented a 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:** Annually request self-identification to be able to gauge DEI progress over time. Routinely evaluate the Board selection process to allow for a broader and potentially more diverse pool of applicants. The Board application process has broadened since initial adoption of this Action Plan in 2022 to allow for applications, rather than rely on tap-on-the-shoulder promotions.
- **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, as part of new employee onboarding (similar to 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 regularly reached out to local affinity bar groups in an effort to increase interest in volunteering with a broader attorney base. The following groups will be contacted on an annual basis:
 - Minnesota American Indian Bar Association
 - Minnesota Black Women Lawyers Network
 - Minnesota Association for Black Lawyers
 - Minnesota Hispanic Bar Association
 - Minnesota Lavender Bar Association
 - Minnesota Asian Pacific American Bar Association
 - Hmong American Bar Association
 - Korean American Bar Association of Minnesota

- Somali American Bar Association
- Minnesota Women Lawyers
- Minnesota Disability Bar Association
- **Vendor Selection Considerations:** When selecting vendors, such as speakers or partner organizations for fundraising, it is recommended that the organization consider the following to ensure our vendors align with our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion:
 - Prioritize engaging with individuals and organizations that demonstrate a commitment to inclusion within their leadership, staff, or public presence. This includes, but is not limited to, those owned or led by individuals from underrepresented communities. When considering speakers or trainers, look for a diverse range of voices and perspectives that can enrich our programs and resonate with a broad audience.
 - Ensure that the values and public messaging of potential partners and speakers align with our DEI Mission Statement. For fundraising partners, consider their demonstrated commitment to social impact and equity, particularly as it relates to children and the communities we serve.
 - For speakers and trainers, assess how their content and delivery are designed to be inclusive and accessible for broad audiences. This helps to ensure that the materials and presentations are culturally sensitive and understandable. For partners, consider how their engagement could help us reach and serve a more diverse donor base, volunteer base, or client population.
 - Encourage board members, staff, and volunteers to actively seek out and recommend vendors, speakers, and partners from their networks who embody DEI principles.

It is recommended CLC affirmatively schedule face time with these organizations and to collaborate specifically with any affinity groups that indicate an interest in partnership. We are also recommending DEI-specific training be added as a core component to the new volunteer training (discussed further below).

C. Promote Education on Topics Affecting Our Clients Within the Organization.

In addition, to better ensure that we understand the unique needs of the children and youth we exist to serve, CLC can and should make efforts to increase skills and awareness on relevant topics to those groups already part of our organization. We recommend the following actions as applicable to the various groups within the organization:

- **Board:** Encourage annual trainings on topics recommended by staff who work most closely with our clients, including on topics such as dealing with bias and trauma.

- **Staff:** Facilitate regular trainings on topics pertinent to the clients we represent on topics relevant to them, including issues such as dealing with bias and trauma.
- **Volunteers:** Incorporate training on topics recommended by staff who work most closely with our clients, including on topics such as dealing with bias and trauma, 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 Committee feels strongly the need to impress that efforts and values described in this Action Plan are not a one-and-done or a check-the-box exercise. The DEI Working Group recommends that CLC continue to review and update this Action Plan regularly to ensure that the needs of the children and youth we serve are being met with strong and empathetic advocacy.