

Introduction

As Ontario's leading health-care union, we believe in the equal treatment of our members and their right to be free from any form of racism, discrimination, and harassment in work and learning environments.

We are committed to fostering environments where equity, accessibility, inclusion and belonging are experienced by members and staff alike. We recognize that conversations about racism, discrimination, oppression, accessibility barriers and inequities can be deeply personal and emotionally challenging. Participants may bring direct, indirect, intergenerational or collective lived experiences that influence how they engage in these discussions.

The Guidelines

- Create and maintain a respectful, inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone participating.
- Recognize we are all on different learning and personal journeys. We may enter conversations with different experiences, knowledge and perspectives.
- Reflect on how our social identities, lived experiences, power and privilege may shape how we engage with others.
- Be mindful of the diverse lived experiences of others when sharing our perspectives, knowledge and opinions.
- Speak from our own experiences using 'I' statements. Rather than debating hypothetical positions or playing 'Devil's Advocate,' share genuine questions and perspectives.
- Approach differences with curiosity rather than judgment and seek to understand before responding.
- Respect the privacy of others. Personal stories shared during meetings, discussions or activities should remain confidential unless the individual has given permission to share them.
- Recognize we all make mistakes. If someone lets us know our words or actions caused harm, listen openly, acknowledge the impact and be willing to learn.
- Remember that intent and impact are not always the same.

Putting the Guidelines into Practice

- Be mindful of how much space you take in discussions. If you tend to speak often, make room for others. If you tend to speak less, consider sharing your perspective.
- When discussing racism, discrimination, oppression or exclusion, recognize that others may be speaking from lived experience. Engage with care and avoid asking others to explain, defend or prove their experiences.
- Do not use racial slurs or discriminatory jokes when sharing stories, examples or questions.
- Be aware that phrases such as 'all lives matter' or 'playing the race card' have caused harm and are not appropriate in ONA meetings, events or community spaces.
- If you disagree with a comment, focus on the idea rather than the individual.
- Avoid making assumptions about another person's gender identity or pronouns. If you are unsure, respectfully ask or wait until the individual shares them. If you make a mistake, briefly apologize, correct yourself and move forward.
- Help create an accessible environment by respecting different communication styles, allowing time for processing and identifying accommodations that support participation.
- Care for yourself throughout meetings and events. If you need to take a break or step away, you are encouraged to do so.

Creating inclusive meetings, events and community spaces is a shared responsibility. Each of us contributes to building an environment where people are treated with dignity, respect and belonging.