

Toronto HIV/AIDS Network (THN) Diversity Statement

The Toronto HIV/AIDS Network (THN) is committed to diversity and inclusion by recognizing the variety of personal and community experiences, values, and world-views that arise from differences of culture and circumstances. The purpose of this statement is to reflect and outline the Network's position in the promotion of respect for diversity and the recognition that inequities, stigma, discrimination, social exclusion, power imbalances, and unjust social, economic, and political policies may create barriers when individuals/service users living with and affected by HIV, and communities made vulnerable to HIV, attempt to access information, support, and/or services.

THN recognizes that the inclusion and practice of diversity is integral to the success of the Network's Mission to facilitate "HIV/AIDS planning, collaboration, engagement and innovation to improve access to programs and services for people from diverse communities living with and most affected by HIV/AIDS". As a Network, THN is committed to respecting, valuing, and celebrating the diverse and unique attributes, characteristics and perspectives that make each person who they are. Diversity includes health including HIV status, HCV, co-infection(s) or concurrent health issues; mental health status, age; race/colour and ethnicity; gender, gender identities and expression; sexual orientation; language differences and level of literacy; nationality, citizenship/immigration status and country of origin; incarceration status and record of offences; parental status; marital status; membership in a union or staff association; religious beliefs; political beliefs; disability, recognizing the underlying principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity, and including level of physical, mental, neurocognitive and intellectual abilities; history of colonization; socio-economic status; receipt of public assistance; substance use; sources of income, including sex work; communication and behavioral styles and requests for reasonable accommodations; the perspectives of each individual shaped by their experiences and culture—and more.

The THN Diversity Statement is a broad definition of diversity grounded within an anti-racism/anti-oppression (AR/AO) framework and the greater involvement and meaningful engagement of people living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA/MEPA) principle. An AR/AO framework informs THN's acknowledgment of racism as a pervasive form of systemic oppression which maintains unequal balances of power and privilege and harms the ability to reach out to diverse communities and create/ deliver relevant programs and services. At its core, the THN Diversity Statement recognizes the greater involvement and meaningful engagement (GIPA/MEPA) of diverse people living with HIV in the inception, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs and services. With this in mind, GIPA/MEPA will be closely aligned with an AR/AO framework, and be at the forefront of informing THN's Mission. Making a commitment to AR/AO and GIPA/MEPA is not just about policy, but also about how these frameworks intersect and inform practices and procedures (the what *and* the how) within THN and the membership. Intersectionality is the examination of intersections between forms or systems of oppression, domination or discrimination. This approach also recognizes that each of us carries multiple identities that bring with them either privilege or marginalization and it is the confluence of these identities that often result in disparities. For organizations, in a practical sense, this is also a useful framework to consider as we develop approaches for governance, programming and services.

We, as a Network, will

- Work in solidarity with Indigenous peoples based on the recognition of an Indigenous world view, the inter-generational effects of colonialism and that THN members acknowledge the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.
- Undertake work that supports an inclusive, sex positive, harm reduction, anti-racist, anti-oppressive, participatory and intersectional framework to improve access to programs and services for people from diverse communities living with, affected by, and at risk of HIV/AIDS.
- Commit to the greater involvement and meaningful engagement of people living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA/MEPA) from diverse communities. At its centre, GIPA/MEPA values the diverse lived experiences of people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs) and “is grounded in the human rights and the dignity of the full human being” as laid out in The Ontario Accord.
- Promote social cohesion and participation, increase understanding, awareness and respect for difference, and build trust and co-operation among diverse communities living with, affected by and at risk of HIV/AIDS, through our programs, activities and services.
- Work in solidarity to combat discrimination, racism, intolerance, oppression, social exclusion, and eradicate systemic barriers experienced by diverse communities living with and most affected by HIV/AIDS.
- Take action to work in solidarity in responding to structural barriers that include but are not limited to: oppressive immigration regimes and policies; lack of affordable and accessible housing; and the criminal justice system which criminalizes people living with HIV through HIV non-disclosure laws that all hinder access to health for people from diverse communities living with and most affected by HIV/AIDS.
- Engage the power of diverse strengths, talent and partnerships to develop innovative solutions which create social and physical environments that promote better health of people from diverse communities living with and most affected by HIV/AIDS from a social determinants of health framework.
- Develop, implement, and maintain non-judgemental policies and procedures that promote a diverse, safe and respectful work environment for all clients, staff, board, volunteers and members.
- Support and adhere to the principles of equality and respect found within the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *Ontario Human Rights Code*, *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, evolving Human Rights case law, Employment Standards, the City of Toronto’s Human Rights and Anti Harassment/Discrimination Policy and other relevant legislation.
- Update this living document as required.

Glossary of Terms

Anti-Racism Framework

The most formal of the approaches, this framework has its origins in the American civil rights movement. This framework is often adopted by organizations that recognize racism as the most pervasive form of systemic oppression and or identify specific resistance within their organization to address issues of racism.

Douglas Stewart for Competence Consultants & Associates, May 2000

Anti-Oppression Framework

The anti-oppression approach borrows heavily from the anti-racism framework. The anti-oppression framework includes very similar purposeful strategies to challenge systemic oppression. This approach acknowledges the different manifestations of oppressions and also their intersectionality.

Douglas Stewart for Competence Consultants & Associates, May 2007

Culture

The set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.

Matsumoto 1996: 16

The Ontario Accord

<http://oan.red/ontario-accord/>

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the examination of intersections between forms or systems of oppression, domination or discrimination. It recognizes that various experiences of oppression compound one another, and that it is impossible to tackle them one at a time. This approach also recognizes that each of us carries multiple identities that bring with them either privilege or marginalization and it is the confluence of these identities that often result in disparities. This approach also recognizes that these identities are important and relevant as we work with people. In a practical sense, for organizations this is a useful framework to consider as we develop approaches for governance, programming and services.(*source unknown*)

Social Determinants of Health/ Circumstance

The social determinants of health are the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work and age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness. These circumstances are in turn shaped by a wider set of forces: economics, social policies, and politics.

http://www.who.int/social_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/key_concepts/en/