

Key Concepts: Cultural Safety, Equity, and Inclusion

Background

In this document, we provide a collection of important definitions related to cultural safety, equity, and inclusion. Understanding these definitions helps us create spaces where everyone feels respected, included, and treated fairly. This resource is intended to support patient and family partners as we learn and work together to make healthcare safer, more inclusive, and better for all.

Definitions

Anti-Racism: The practice of actively identifying, challenging, preventing, eliminating and changing the values, structures, policies, programs, practices and behaviours that perpetuate racism. It is more than just being “not racist” and involves taking action to create conditions of greater inclusion, equality and justice.

Cultural humility: A life-long process of self-reflection and self-critique. It is foundational to achieving a culturally safe environment. Cultural humility begins with an in-depth examination of our own assumptions, beliefs and privilege embedded in our own understanding and practice

Diversity: Means the presence of differences in lived experiences and perspectives – including but not limited to race, ethnicity, colour, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ancestry, religion, marital status, family status, ability, age, class, socio-economics.

Equity: Refers to the process of achieving equality in the distribution of resources, opportunities and outcomes for historically and currently underrepresented and/or marginalized groups. Equity recognizes that each person and group has different circumstances and different needs. It requires the presence of processes that ensure support is provided based on individual and group needs to ensure fair and just treatment and outcomes.

Inclusion: The practice of fostering a sense of belonging

Indigenous Cultural Safety: The process of making spaces, services and organizations safer and more equitable for Indigenous people by considering colonial history and seeking to eliminate structural Racism and Discrimination. Cultural safety is also an ‘outcome’ based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the healthcare system; it is when Indigenous people feel safe when receiving Health Care.

Indigenous-specific racism: The unique nature of stereotyping, bias, and prejudice about Indigenous peoples in Canada that is rooted in the history of settler colonialism. It is the ongoing race-based discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by Indigenous peoples that perpetuates power imbalances, systemic discrimination, and inequitable outcomes stemming from colonial policies and practices.

Systemic racism (also referred to as structural or institutional racism): A form of racism that is embedded and enacted into societal structures, institutions, and systems (e.g., practices, policies, legislation) and results in perpetuating inequities such as profiling, stereotyping, social exclusion, and discrimination for racial groups.

Wise Practices: Strengths-based actions, tools, principles, or decisions that are culturally appropriate and community driven. Wise practices recognize the wisdom in each Indigenous community and in the community's own stories of achieving success. The concept of wise practices recognizes that culture matters.