

Family Services à la famille Ottawa Position Paper on Racism

I. Position of Family Services à la famille Ottawa

Family Services à la famille Ottawa will:

- Enact our anti-racism policy
- Create and maintain partnerships with other community organizations that seek to eliminate racism
- Commit to providing counselling, community programs and services that are free from racial bias to individuals and families

Family Services à la famille Ottawa seeks to build a safe, just, healthy and diverse society, where each person can thrive and contribute; enriched by their families; supported by friends, neighbours and communities; and served by dedicated community organizations. To this purpose, we commit our resources, skills, creativity, and passion to create awareness about racism and will work diligently towards the elimination of racism and its impacts.

Definitionsⁱ

Racism implies directly or indirectly the superiority of one group over another. Racism can be imbedded in systems and institutions associated with a dominant group's power and privilege.

Racial discrimination is one of the main consequences of racism. It is action based (intentional or not) and is based on a person's race that withholds or limits access to benefits available to other members of the dominant group.

Systemic racism or institutional racism is consciously (or not) part of the structures of an entire organization's rules, practices, policies, (normal way of doing things) which perpetuate disadvantage or have a negative impact on groups or an individual due to their race, racial background or country of origin.

Internalized racism is the acceptance of attitudes, beliefs or ideologies by members of stigmatized ethnic racial groups about inferiority of one's own ethnic racial group.

FSFO works to address the service challenges that face racialized, First Nations, Inuit and Métis families and individuals:

- Through ensuring access to counselling, community programs and services free from racial bias at FSFO or in our community
- Integrate the understanding that racism impacts individuals and families in every area of their lives into the delivery of FSFO services
- Addressing the impacts of poverty that racially diverse families often face
- Addressing the impacts of social isolation that many racialized individuals deal with daily

II. Background and Supporting Information

Racism and Human Rights

Canada is internationally committed to equality by ratifying all the major international human rights treaties including... the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.ⁱⁱ

Under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, our country has committed to provide all citizens with “the right to equal treatment before and under the law; and to equal benefit and protection of the law without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, and age, mental or physical disability. The courts have also recognized other grounds of discrimination that are not specifically set out in the *Charter* such as sexual orientation and marital status”ⁱⁱⁱ. All citizens of Canada are entitled to these rights under law and have the right to recourse under section 24 of the *Charter* if these rights are violated.

In Ontario, we are legislated to follow the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, which states, “...every person has the right to be free from racial discrimination and harassment. You should not be treated differently because of your race or other related grounds, such as your ancestry, ethnicity, religion or place of origin...”^{iv}

Impacts of Racism

Many families and individuals in our community live with racism and its impacts on a daily basis. Families are subjected to being called racist names, having their culture or religion denigrated, or being denied the right to participate fully in society as equals. In Canada, given the human rights protections we have, it is unacceptable for any individual or family to be made to feel inferior or ashamed because of their racial background.

- “Poverty is racialized, that is, disproportionate to people of colour who are Canadian-born and newcomers”^v
- “Today, one in four Aboriginal children is in foster care in Ottawa. Without culture-based intervention, cultural assimilation continues...”^{vi}
- “Race or ethnicity is the most common motivation for hate crimes in Canada (60 per cent)...”^{vii}

III. Summary of Family Services à la famille Ottawa Position

It is unacceptable for anyone to live in unequal situations, unable to meet their basic needs in a country as prosperous as Canada. Family Services à la famille Ottawa believes that it is our duty as a provider of services to families to advocate on behalf of all families and individuals for an equal, healthy, just, and safe society.

We can no longer ignore that racism continues to be the systemic cause of several social problems including, disproportionate levels of poverty, homelessness, mental and physical health problems, and unemployment. Family Services à la famille Ottawa believes all families and individuals should live free from racism. We encourage all community members and agencies in Ottawa to join us as we work towards raising awareness and someday eliminating racist attitudes and practices.

ⁱ All definitions provided by members of FSFO Social Justice Committee

ⁱⁱ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. [Available online]: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. [Available online]: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/>

^{iv} Ontario Human Rights Commission. [Available online]: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/issues/racism>

^v Children’s Aid Society of Toronto, Child Poverty in the GTA, p.15, 2008. [Available online]:

<http://www.torontocas.ca/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/castchildpovertyreportdec2008.pdf>

^{vi} City for All Women Initiative, *Aboriginal Community Snapshot*, p.5, 2009. [Available online]: <http://www.cawi-ivtf.org/pdf/EI-Lens/CS-Aboriginal.pdf>

^{vii} City for All Women Initiative, *Visible Minorities Community Snapshot*, p. 8, 2009. [Available online]: <http://www.cawi-ivtf.org/pdf/EI-Lens/CS-VisibleMinorities-E-nov09.pdf>