

Anti-Racism Accountability Standards

Background:

Solid Ground is committed to ensuring that its programs, services, staff and Board of Directors are accountable to the individuals we serve. In doing so, we have the opportunity to provide services in a client-driven manner that is responsive to client needs. This commitment is a direct result of our anti-racism work, which is based upon the following premises:

- 1)** Solid Ground's mission is to create a just and caring community free from poverty, prejudice and neglect. Institutional racism is a direct cause of poverty. To address poverty, we need to address racism. Undoing racism is a key to unlocking the door to some particular forms and patterns of poverty established during the earliest history of this country when people of specific racial groups were identified as commodities (e.g., African slaves, Chinese railroad workers and other groups). The institutions established in those early days were clearly structured to benefit white men. If you look at who has power in this country today, it's easy to see that it's primarily still white men. What this tells us is that our institutions haven't changed much over the years — and that they are still structured in a way that excludes women and people of color.
- 2)** Almost half of Solid Ground's clients are people of color. Our staff and Board need to reflect the diversity of our client base if we are to be truly accountable to the communities we serve. For us, being accountable means sharing the power that we have as an institution with the people we serve. It also means making sure that there are people in our organization — particularly in positions of power — who are representative of the people we serve. Otherwise, we face the risk of perpetuating institutional racism by allowing one culture to dominate our decision- and policy-making processes.
- 3)** It is difficult to effectively serve clients who come from different cultures if we do not understand these cultures and how they differ from our own. We also need tools (like interpreters and translated materials) to serve people who speak languages other than English. Becoming culturally competent is a component of being anti-racist, particularly since the default culture for interactions and business in our country is white culture. This reinforces a single way of doing things that keeps racism locked into our institutions and society. Each of us needs to learn about the myriad cultures that make up our community — particularly those with which we interact daily — in order to effectively and respectfully live and work together and build a society that doesn't allow any one culture and the people most associated with it to dominate. We're working toward a system in which power is shared regardless of cultural (or racial) identity.
- 4)** Our staff want and need input into decisions that affect them. The same is true for the people we serve. We need to make sure that our clients have input in decision making at many different levels (on our Board of Directors, in relationship to program changes/enhancements, etc.).
- 5)** We cannot address racism alone. We must collaborate with and support other organizations doing community-based anti-racism work. We both learn and teach through the relationships we build. Just as a person making a positive change in her/his life needs supportive people to encourage him/her to

maintain change, we need the support of other individuals and organizations seeking to become anti-racist. While we need to focus energy internally at Solid Ground, ultimately we'll only succeed in our efforts by addressing governmental or other institutional barriers side by side with other committed individuals and organizations. Internal and external efforts are both necessary to achieve our goals.

- 6) For Solid Ground, doing anti-racism work means making sure that our staff have the knowledge, resources and tools they need to effectively serve people of color and people from different cultures. It's about eliminating the barriers that our clients face in accessing benefits, entitlements and other services. It's about helping us work better with each other by increasing our understanding of our different cultures and beliefs, making our work environment welcoming to everyone who works or receives services here, and ensuring that our workplace portrays the diversity of our community. Lastly, it's about figuring out how we can share our power with the diverse racial, cultural and economic groups that make up our community.

Agency Responsibilities:

Solid Ground must ensure that its policies, procedures, structures and systems:

- Do not create barriers to the full participation of people of color in our services and activities.
- Allow for the inclusion of the opinions and ideas of people of color in our decision-making processes at all levels of the organization.
- Support the hiring, retention and professional growth of people of color in the organization.
- Prioritize staff training to ensure that they understand the impacts of institutional racism and that we deliver services in a culturally competent manner.

As part of this process, management and supervisory staff must ensure that employees have a clear understanding of how racism manifests itself in our organization and the broader community, and how it impacts the services we provide and the clients who receive our services.

Expectations of Employees:

Employees at all levels of the organization will be held accountable for doing their work in a manner consistent with our mission, respectful of the cultures and beliefs of our clients, and responsive to changing client needs as determined in consultation with those we serve. As such, employees are expected to:

- Actively participate in agency-sponsored trainings designed to educate staff about institutional racism and how it manifests itself.
- Understand white privilege and internalized racial superiority.
- Provide services in a culturally competent manner.
- Be respectful of and support the leadership of people of color working at Solid Ground to ensure that their voices are heard and acted upon.
- Ensure that the decisions they make do not create unnecessary barriers to service for people of color.
- Ensure that the people they serve actively participate in all decisions made about the services they receive.
- Actively work to identify and help Solid Ground undo the institutional racism that exists at our agency.