

Civic Engagement of Diverse Communities

Peel Children's Aid Best Practices

1. Board Recruitment Process
2. Consultation with Diverse Communities
3. Board Diversity Monitoring Committee
4. Community Engagement and Partnerships
5. Diversity and anti-oppression training
6. Board anti-oppression policy

1. Board Recruitment Process

As the agency continuously strives to be more helpful to marginalized communities, we find that diverse members of the board provide perspectives that are alternative to the perspectives of mainstream board members. Diverse board members also support program evaluation, and reflect on their personal experiences to provide feedback and direction with regard to the agency's relevance to diverse communities.

- The Board Development Committee makes it a priority to consider the board's diverse complement in its recruitment of new candidates. Candidates are also interviewed for appropriate fit and expected to abide by the board's code of ethics which names our commitment to diversity and anti-oppression.
- The lead for the Board Development Committee is a racialized woman who is a long standing resident of Peel Region and is therefore well known and well connected. She has provided access to communities that have not traditionally been aware of Peel Children's Aid.
- At the board table, a more diverse board assists with the policy development of the organization and can use their voices as advocates for new directions for the organization that will specifically increase the positive impact that the agency has on the community.
- In May 2011 Peel Children's Aid was recognized for board level best practice initiatives in diversity and anti-oppression by being the recipient of the annual **Maytree Diversity in Board Governance Award** and making it a priority to recruit board members from diverse backgrounds.

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2. Consultation with Diverse Communities

- To ensure we are capturing the voice of our clients to help us deliver quality services, we now include survey questions in multiple languages for our client satisfaction survey.
- Our current strategic plan has been informed through our ongoing commitment to stakeholder and community feedback. As we continue to operationalize our strategic plan we have initiated plans to gather further qualitative feedback from the community in order to inform our service directions.
- In addition, Peel Children's Aid has had a long standing relationship with Ryerson School of Social Work for internationally trained social workers. Through this program we have hired many front line social workers who represent countries from all over the world. Through the process we have received rich practice recommendations and innovative ideas.

3. Board Diversity Monitoring Committee

- The board has a sub-committee – The Board Diversity Monitoring Committee – that oversees the agency's progress toward anti-oppression and diversity competence.
- Peel Children's Aid is the only CAS in the province that has a Senior Manager of Diversity and Anti-Oppression. This Senior Manager reports directly to the Executive Director and leads the agency's journey. The Senior Manager of Diversity and Anti-Oppression acts as a liaison to the Board Diversity Monitoring Committee.
- For Peel Children's Aid, having a Board Diversity Monitoring Committee (BDMC) provides a legitimate Board level space for matters of diversity to be considered. The BDMC regularly brings issues to the attention of the board. For example, the BDMC prepared the board's end statements regarding anti-oppression and included a diverse board membership as a priority and a measure.

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4. Community Engagement & Partnerships Department

- The engagement of diverse stakeholders and staff has informed the agency's Strategic Plan 2011-2014 which has given shape and direction to major initiatives. The initiatives include the development of a new department with a goal to develop a strategic approach to working with communities in Peel that are marginalized, ethno-cultural, and/or racialized and to partner with specialized services to these groups. The primary function of this department is to engage with multiple stakeholders including diverse communities to influence agency practices and policies. In addition, the agency is committed to enhancing the well being of families and the protection of children by increasing the dialogue with diverse community members and increasing awareness and education of the agency mandate.
- The goal of the Community Engagement and Partnerships Department is to:
 - ✓ Build trust and credibility with service users and stakeholders
 - ✓ Compile community feedback to achieve system change
 - ✓ Better serve marginalized communities
 - ✓ Educate stakeholders and community on Peel Children's Aid mandate, services and supports

5. Diversity and Anti-oppression Training

- The agency has moved from 'multiculturalism,' to 'diversity' and now to 'anti-oppression.' But the journey has not been easy and there continue to be staff and leaders who struggle with the concept of anti-oppression. Since power and privilege are invisible forces, people struggle to understand why an anti-oppressive approach is necessary. One strategy has been to invest in two phases of anti-oppression training for both staff and board members. Both phases of training provide rationale for why anti-oppressive practice is necessary, particularly in child welfare. As part of our anti-oppression learning, we also invest in Positive Space training for staff and board members as well as informal, ongoing learning spaces on anti-oppression – Becoming an Ally (for staff and board), Developing Allies (for management and board) and Promising Practices (for all).

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6. Board Anti-oppression Policy

- Peel Children's Aid has a board level Anti-Oppression Policy. One of the five named goals within the policy is to have a staff and board that are reflective of the clients and community served.
- The board regularly reviews policies and ends statements to ensure that they align with anti-oppressive outcomes. For example the Board Development Committee makes efforts to ensure that the relevant policies and procedures are in place to support efforts to diversify the board.

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