



## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION POLICY

### Policy Statement

The Strength in Me program is dedicated to fostering a barrier-free environment that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive. We strive to ensure that all participants, employees, volunteers, board members, and stakeholders feel respected, valued, and heard, regardless of their gender, race, sexual orientation or identity, disability, age, or education. By embracing our diverse backgrounds and experiences, we aim to build strong and supportive community.

In our program, **"diversity"** refers to the wide range of characteristics that make individuals unique, including but not limited to national origin, ancestry, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and family structures.

**"Equity"** refers to a particular approach that recognizes the natural differences among individuals to achieve equality. When individuals are treated equitably, both their visible and hidden differences are acknowledged and considered.

**"Inclusion"** entails the establishment of an inclusive environment that promotes a sense of belonging, where everyone's unique qualities are recognized, respected, and valued. It involves acknowledging and appreciating the skills of every individual, while encouraging their full participation and personal growth.

A **"barrier-free environment"** refers to a physical or social space that is designed and structured in a way that allows unrestricted access and equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities or limitations. It aims to eliminate any obstacles or barriers that may hinder the full participation and inclusion of all individuals, regardless of their physical, sensory, or cognitive abilities. Our goal is to establish policies and practices that foster inclusivity, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all individuals.

**"Discrimination"** takes place when an individual's distinct qualities, abilities, and circumstances are not evaluated on an individual basis. Discrimination involves making generalizations based on presumed characteristics, which can lead to the exclusion of individuals, denial of benefits, or imposition of hardships.

Strength in Me's operating principles the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy aligns with the legislations such as the **Ontario Human Rights Code**, the **Canadian Human Rights Act**, the **Employment Equity Act**, and the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act**. This policy will be implemented based on the following principles:

- All members of the Strength in Me program, including participants, employees, volunteers, and board members, will be treated with dignity and respect.
- All members of the Strength in Me program have equal opportunities to grow and develop. Our aim is to recognize and overcome any obstacles that may exist, striving to establish equal opportunities for everyone involved.
- We have a strict policy against discrimination in both our workplace and programming, in accordance with the guidelines set by human rights legislation.
- Our goal is to create an inclusive and barrier-free environment where everyone is valued, recognized, and promote a sense of belonging.
- Our utmost commitment is to create a safe environment where participants can freely express themselves and feel a sense of belonging within our community. We deeply value and respect the diverse experiences and ideas of the youth we serve.



- We recognize the importance of every role in our daily operations, and our achievements are rooted in our appreciation for diverse perspectives and life experiences. Our education, training, and professional development programs for staff, volunteers, and board members are designed with principles of equity and inclusion at their core. Our goal is to foster an organizational culture that embraces diversity, where individuals from all backgrounds feel valued for their unique knowledge and skills.
- Diversity and inclusion are core principles that shape Strength in Me's mission. We are dedicated to offering a wide array of resources and adaptable skills to meet the diverse needs of our participants. We not only aim for success in sports, but we also value and embrace the unique qualities and individuality of each person. It is our objective to authentically portray the diverse composition of our participants through positive imagery. We actively seek out and value different perspectives, recognizing the immense value that diverse experiences and viewpoints bring to our community.
- In accordance with legislations such as the **Ontario Human Rights Code**, the **Workplace Safety and Insurance Act**, the **Employment Standards Act**, and the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act**, we diligently strive to accommodate employees in the workplace. Our commitment to compliance ensures that we make reasonable efforts to meet the needs of our employees and create an inclusive environment.
- Our goal is to establish a setting where individuals are held accountable for their actions and encouraged to be self-aware. We have zero tolerance for harassment and discrimination, and we actively address both conscious and unconscious biases. Our aim is to cultivate a positive work environment for everyone involved.
- At Strength in Me, our objective is to foster the growth of Youth Development. These exceptional individuals not only possess their own distinct qualities, but they also develop and excel through the influence and support of their peers and mentors. As they progress, they become positive role models and mentors, actively contributing to a dynamic community that values generosity, learning, and inclusivity.