

## SECTION I : DEFINITIONS

**oppression** : 1. prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control. 2. the exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel, or unjust manner.

**privilege** : 1. a right, immunity, or benefit enjoyed only by a person beyond the advantages of most. 2. a benefit experienced by a person or group of people based upon a basic trait such as gender, age, class, race, ability, size/weight, etc.

**discrimination** : the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the basis of race, age, class, ability, or gender.

**sexual orientation** : the way individual people classify themselves in terms of who they are attracted to on a romantic or sexual level, also including people who are asexual (people who do not experience romantic or sexual attraction to others).

**gender identity** : the way individual people classify and present themselves in terms of gender, whether it be within our society's gender binary (male and female) or outside of this binary. "gender" can be defined as a set of behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes that make up a person's identity in a certain class. our gender identity often dictates what we choose to look like in terms of physical appearance such as hairstyle, facial hair grooming, clothing choices, etc.

**ableism** : discrimination based upon a person's ability; discrimination against people who are intellectually and/or physically disabled. ableism can also include Deaf and hard of hearing folks, although it's important to note that certain Deaf and hard of hearing folks consider it offensive to be labeled as disabled.

**classism** : discrimination based upon a person's class status; discrimination against lower-class and poor people.

**ageism** : discrimination based upon a person's real or perceived age; discrimination against older folks.

**audism** : discrimination based upon a person's hearing status; discrimination against Deaf and hard of hearing people.

**sizeism** : discrimination against people based on their size or weight; discrimination against people who are fat or generally considered to be overweight.

**transphobia** : discrimination against people in the trans\* spectrum.

**cisgendered** : a person whose gender identity matches the binary sex (male or female) assigned to them at birth.

**trans\*** : an umbrella term describing a range of gender identities that are *not* cisgendered; examples include female-to-male transgendered people (FtMs), male-to-female transgendered people (MtFs), agendered people, genderqueer people, and 2-spirited people. not all people who are not cisgendered identify as trans\*. not everyone on the trans\* spectrum chooses to or is able to change their name to reflect their gender identity. additionally, not all trans\* people choose to (or are able to) change the way they dress or their appearance in general, or have SRS (sexual reassignment surgery) or take hormones such as estrogen or testosterone. this could be for a slew of reasons, including health, finances, personal beliefs, religion, and much more.

**queer** : 1. an umbrella term encompassing a range of sexual orientations *besides* heterosexual (and sometimes gender identities *besides* cisgendered as well); examples include gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual. 2. can also refer to a person who identifies as something *other than* heterosexual who considers themselves to be in some way political about their sexuality or gender identity. not all people who are not heterosexual identify as queer or gay/lesbian/bisexual.

**lived experience** : things that make up a person's life story; things they have been directly exposed to through the course of their life.

**zero tolerance policy** : a policy that allows no exception; a policy that is strictly adhered to.

**marginalized** :

## SECTION II : THE BASICS

working within an anti-oppressive framework means acknowledging that various oppressions (i.e. sexism, racism, classism, ableism, etc.) exist within our society and working to “remove or negate the influence of that oppression” (wikipedia). this means recognizing the ways in which systems of oppression and discrimination work to disempower certain types of people and unfairly give power or privilege to certain other types of people (i.e. cisgendered men, white folks, the middle/upper classes, able-bodied people, etc.). what that means in terms of our work at **accessibletoronto** is that we strive to empower people with disabilities by providing them information with which they can regain individual agency and make informed decisions for themselves without having to rely on subjective determinations of what is and is not accessible (often made by able-bodied people). it also means that within our staff and volunteer structures, we employ an anti-oppressive framework and a zero tolerance policy for discrimination and oppressive behaviour of any kind, as stated in our policies and procedures. we also work with the core values of **transparency**, **responsibility to ourselves and others**, **accountability**, **respect for self and others**, **mutual cooperation**, and **dignity**. this means that :

- we as staff are *transparent* to our project volunteers and other participants about our policies, procedures, and the workings of the project;
- as volunteers and staff, we are always *responsible to ourselves and others* for maintaining safer spaces and honouring the lived experiences of staff, other volunteers, and audit location staff and patrons;
- we are *accountable to ourselves, accessibletoronto staff, and other volunteers* for our actions and words and are willing to make changes to our behaviours to maintain safer spaces for everyone;
- we strive to always operate in the spirit of *respect for ourselves and others* not only within the **accessibletoronto** project but in all aspects of our lives;
- we work to *cooperate* with project staff, other volunteers, and audit location staff and patrons; and lastly,
- we work to uphold the *dignity* of ourselves and others by honouring our own and others' independence and interdependence and working to provide constructive feedback rather than participating in shaming or blaming behaviours.

### SECTION III : PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

basically what all this means is that we treat each other respectfully, even if we don't necessarily understand the way other people have to live or choose to live their lives. this doesn't mean that we have to always agree with everything that others are saying or doing, but it means that we **do** have to respect the fact that other folks have the right to make their own choices in life and to follow paths that we ourselves may not necessarily be following. for example, this means respecting others' sexual orientations and gender identities, their decisions around how they dress and their relationships with their bodies, how they behave and interact with others, and much more.

we also need to understand the critical point that although we may sometimes have questions about other folks' lived experience, such as people of different classes than us, people with different disabilities, people with different gender identities, or people of different ethnicities or races than us, *it is not up to other marginalized people to educate us around their lived experience*. what this means is that even though we may wish to learn about someone who has a different disability than we do, for example, it's not up to that person to educate us about their disability and we can't push that responsibility on them. some people may be okay with educating us about their lived experience or providing us with resources to educate ourselves, but others may not be willing or able to do that and that's totally okay. it's important for us to take that responsibility on ourselves and do the work to educate ourselves about different lived experiences rather than relying on others to do that work for us.

#### SECTION IV : ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN **acesibletoronto**

it's important for all volunteers to understand that by agreeing to volunteer with **acesibletoronto**, they are accepting certain rights and responsibilities and are expected to exhibit a level of accountability for their words and actions. many of your responsibilities are listed above. a very important note about accountability has to do with our zero tolerance policy around discrimination and oppressive behaviour.

in our policies and procedures, it's stated that if a volunteer engages in discriminatory or oppressive behaviour towards *anyone* (*i.e.* project staff and volunteers or audit location staff and patrons), they are responsible for being accountable for their actions by meeting with **acesibletoronto** staff to debrief around the situation. if there is a *second* episode of discrimination or oppressive behaviour, the volunteer will again be asked to debrief with **at** staff, at which point they will also be required to resign from their volunteer duties with the project. it's important to understand that the purpose of the debriefing sessions is not to shame and blame people – it's to increase our accountability to ourselves, the project staff, and the people being discriminated against or acting oppressively towards regarding our words and actions. too often these types of behaviours go unaddressed within everyday life; for the safety and basic rights of our volunteers it is crucial for all volunteers to be held accountable for their opinions, statements, and behaviours.

#### SECTION V : THE VOLUNTEER INFORMATION FORM

when you begin volunteering with **acesibletoronto**, you will be asked to fill in a *volunteer information form*. this form asks for basic information such as your name, preferred pronoun (*i.e.* he, she, they), contact details, accommodation information, and general availability. the purpose of this form is for **acesibletoronto** staff quinto and geoff to be able to keep track of volunteers working with the project and use information such as availability and accommodation information to plan events and address accessibility issues for volunteers. the completed forms will never be shown to anyone outside the leadership of the **acesibletoronto** project.