

## **South House Anti-Oppression Policy**

### **PURPOSE:**

South House recognizes that although we are an organization dedicated to pursuing social and specifically gender justice, many of the economic, political, social, cultural and institutional dynamics of domination, power and privilege existing within society at large also exist within our organization on both individual and systemic levels.

This policy seeks to outline the steps to ensure that South House Staff, Volunteers and Board Members are consistently working to address these dynamics at individual and institutional levels and to act as a guiding policy for the creation and implementation of an anti-oppression framework at South House.

This policy is intended to act as a guiding policy for the further development of existing South House policies and practises, as well as the creation of new policies.

### **LIMITATIONS:**

We recognize that although an anti-oppression policy is useful to protect and support anti-oppression principles and to promote inclusivity, equity and accessibility at South House, no policy can abolish oppression within our organization. Fighting oppression is an ongoing process, and is not best achieved through a policy document. This policy is intended to encourage all those involved in South House to be self-reflective on their own oppressive behaviours and institutional oppression at South House, and to work to address these. It is also intended to help the organization set concrete goals in order to make our organizational culture, policies and practice more inclusive.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Anti-Oppression** is the practice concerned with eradicating social injustice perpetuated by societal inequalities, particularly along the lines of race, gender, sexual orientation and identity, age, class, ability and religion.

**Oppression** is the domination of one individual or group by another, more powerful individual or group, using cultural, economic, physical, psychological, or social threats or force, and frequently using an explicit ideology to justify the oppression.

Oppression takes many forms including but not limited to: sexism, ableism, ageism, sexism, racism, heterosexism, classism, anti-semitism, lesbophobia, and discrimination based on cultural, ethnic or religious background.

Oppression, evidenced through discrimination, is systemic in our society. It is more than individual acts of violence, segregation, or discrimination-motivated behaviour and actions. Oppression is endemic in our institutions and society and has the effect of exclusion.

**Discrimination** is a system of oppression. Discrimination instills and reinforces false divisions between groups of people. It ascribes positive and negative values to membership of these groups and dictates access to economic, political, and social power based on membership to these groups. Each discriminatory system has its own unique characteristics

and specific content which is directed at a particular social group, but all discriminatory systems share the common elements of identifying a target group characterized by a particular identity, and denying economic, political and/or social power to members of that group. It is important to distinguish between discrimination (which anti-oppression attempts to combat) and distinction for the purposes of fighting oppression. Distinction can and should be encouraged for an ameliorative purpose to combat systemic discrimination.

#### **POLICY GOALS:**

- Explicitly recognize and address systemic oppression (including but not limited to oppression based on race, gender, sex, class, sexuality, status and ability) within the South House environment as it manifests in the organizational culture, activities and structure, as well as in individual practice;
- To promote principles of anti-oppression and equality for all peoples and have this reflected in the organization's policies, procedures, services and in relation to staff, students, community members, Board members, and any others involved in the workings of the organization;
- To identify and challenge barriers that currently exist for people getting involved with South House, accessing South House 's resources, or being employed with South House, and to work to address those through improving the organization's policies and practice;
- To ensure that South House 's resources are being used in the service of marginalized communities, even where they are not active members of South House;
- To create an environment within South House where all forms of oppression are unacceptable;
- To promote greater involvement of people from marginalized communities in the implementation and evaluation of South House, procedures and services on an ongoing basis so their perspectives are constitutive of the organization.

#### **ADDRESSING COMPLAINTS/CONCERNS:**

Individuals within South House are encouraged to approach one another about Oppressive behaviour and to hold each other accountable to the principles of Anti-Oppression in a respectful and compassionate way.

All concerns raised about oppressive or discriminatory practices within South House will be taken seriously. However, claims that contradict the values of South House will be considered illegitimate.

An informal complaint may be brought to a staff person or board member. The approached staff or board member should make clear to the complainant that they may begin a formal or informal complaint process, and should direct them to the the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will strike a committee comprised of members who are not on the Board and were not involved in the initiative in question. The Board of Directors will not share the name or any other identifying information about the complainant with anyone outside of the newly formed committee. The individual raising the concern is considered the central decision making body in determining how the complaint be addressed. For a complete

description of the complaint process, see South House's Complaint and Conflict Resolution Policy.

## **RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:**

### **Rights**

All people involved in South House have the right to be able to participate in all the activities of the organization without being subject to discrimination or harassment. All people involved have the right to hold others involved in the organization, as well as the organization itself, accountable to the principles of anti-oppression and to have respect and support in this process. All people involved have the right to access resources (including literature, media and trainings) to educate themselves on the principles of anti-oppression, and, where these resources are lacking, to request that these resources be provided by the South House board/staff.

### **Responsibilities**

i. Active Members – All active members will be responsible for acting in accordance with the principles of South House's Anti-Oppression policy. Moreover, active members will be responsible for holding other members accountable to these principles. Active members will be considered responsible for modeling anti-oppression principles when doing work or speaking on behalf of South House. Volunteers must participate in basic South House training. Subject to the availability of sessions, volunteers are encouraged to attend additional training sessions including Anti-Oppression workshops.

ii. General Membership & Community – All members are charged with the task of keeping South House accountable to its anti-oppression mandate and offering support to South House in fulfilling this mandate.

iii. Board of Directors – The Board of Directors (BOD) will be responsible for ensuring that South House's policies and practice adequately reflect and communicate an anti-oppression framework. The BOD may coordinate an anti-oppression audit of the organization's policy and practice in conjunction with staff, active members, and other interested individuals/groups, which is to be presented annually at the AGM. Board Members have to participate in mandatory Anti-Oppression training at the beginning of their term.

The BOD will be responsible to ensure that appropriate tools, training, and resources are made available to staff to facilitate the dissemination of this policy to the membership. The BOD will also be responsible for overseeing the complaints process.

iv. Staff – Staff will be responsible for facilitating and organizing trainings, working groups and material dissemination that educate members and the wider community on the principles of anti-oppression. Staff will be responsible for working in collaboration with the BOD to ensure that all processes and events are carried out in accordance with this policy.

**COMMUNICATIONS OF POLICY:**

The South House anti-oppression policy will be made publicly available on our website, and, where appropriate, be communicated on relevant documents and outreach materials.