



The Guild for Human Services'
DIVERSITY PLAN
Equality, Representation, and Culture

POLICY

It is the policy of The Guild for Human Services to provide effective services to people of all abilities, cultures, ages (over 6 years old), races, genders and gender identities, sexual orientations, socio-economic statuses, languages, ethnic backgrounds, spiritual beliefs, and religions. The Guild recognizes, values, affirms, and respects the worth of all individuals, protects human rights, and preserves the dignity of each person. The Guild adheres to equal employment opportunity and non-discrimination practices in all aspects of service.

Further, it is the policy of The Guild for Human Services to maintain a written Diversity and Inclusion Plan that describes how the unique identities of students, individuals, families, staff members, and volunteers are reflected in The Guild's culture and operations.



Defining "Diversity"

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines diversity as "the condition of having or being composed of differing elements: variety." This definition appears simple; but, its complexity is revealed when reconciling how distinctive identities can be supported within a community that seeks solidarity among its members. It is an imperfect process.

When we are at our best, diversity among The Guild's community is shared through the exploration of our differences as well as our common humanity in safe, positive, and nurturing environments. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions within and among us. It is an egalitarian view that presumes differentiation happens among equals. But, when we are at our most challenged, differences can be used to rationalize power and undercut the choices of others.

Even with good intentions, The Guild is not exempt from the impacts of power and privilege in society. It is upon us to improve constantly, promote our strengths, and ensure discrimination does not undermine our common mission. As such, this plan outlines The Guild's FY19-20 goals to advance equality, representative diversity, and a culture of inclusion.

EQUALITY

Equality is the foundation to fostering an environment where all students, individuals, staff, families, and supporters can achieve their potential. It is about protecting rights and removing barriers to self-determination.

Current Status

- All staff and board members at The Guild commit to abiding by equal opportunity and nondiscrimination policies; as a result, The Guild's staff is comprised of a diverse group of people from many communities, cultures, religions, and experiences.
- The Guild accommodates, facilitates, treats, educates, and assists individuals with a wide variety of special needs, including intellectual and physical disabilities, autism, mental health challenges, medical diagnoses, and sensory challenges.
- The Guild School markets services to a variety of funding sources: Department of Children and Families, Department of Mental Health, and school districts from across the state, including rural, urban, suburban, eastern, western, affluent, and disenfranchised districts.
- The Guild ensures non-discriminatory and respectful delivery of services to individuals.
- The Guild provides written materials and verbal communication in a wide range of languages through translation services.
- The Guild has engaged in annual salary equity reviews and adjustments to ensure fair labor practices.

Annual Goals

- All employees and board members will be trained in the protection of human rights.
- The Guild will launch a new WCAG AAA rated website to improve public and community access to information about services and policies.¹
- All employees, students, individuals, and families will have access to The Guild's Diversity Plan and The Guild's Strategic Plan via the website and printed materials.
- The Guild will continue annual salary equity reviews and adjustments to ensure fair labor practices with an added emphasis on internal promotions.
- The Guild will implement the EEO-1 Survey form to collect more complete information regarding the racial and ethnic heritage of staff members and to improve the quality of annual salary equity reviews.

¹ The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are part of a series of [web accessibility](#) guidelines published by the [Web Accessibility Initiative](#) (WAI) of the [World Wide Web Consortium](#) (W3C), the main international standards organization for the Internet. They are a set of guidelines that specify how to make content accessible, primarily for people with [disabilities](#). WCAG AAA rating is the most accessible standard available.

REPRESENTATIVE DIVERSITY

Representative diversity is the proportional representation of varied identities in positions of opportunity and authority. A lack of diversity across all positions, including leadership, can affect The Guild's ability to understand the interests, contributions, and needs of the people we serve. Representative diversity is a challenge of social justice and central to The Guild's well-being.

Current Status

- Beginning in FY17, The Guild reviews annually representative diversity ratios at all levels of the organization.
- In FY18, The Guild made structural changes to staff wages, benefits, and hiring practices to improve representative diversity at all levels of the organization resulting in marked improvement in representative diversity among the following job categories: salaried workers, directors, and chief officers.
- The Guild advertises to diverse pools of student referral sources to promote representative diversity with particular emphasis on socio-economic, ethnic, racial, and gender identities.
- The Guild Parent/Guardian Advisory Committees work with Guild chief officers to (1) represent the interests and concerns of parents/ guardians and (2) serve as a liaison between parents/guardians and The Guild. The Committees' purposes are realized through planned (parent/guardian) meetings, working committee meetings, and email/phone communication.
- The Guild's Board is comprised of parents of Guild service recipients (1/3) and parents of individuals with intellectual disabilities (1/2).
- The Guild purchases supplies and services from certified minority or women-owned businesses, small businesses, or businesses owned by socially or economically disadvantaged persons and/or persons with disabilities.

Annual Goals:

- Formalize a partnership with the International Institute of New England (IINE) to enhance the Medication Administration Program (MAP) training by custom-designing an English language learning (ELL) curricula to improve the MAP test passage rate.
- Formalize a partnership with IINE to construct a customized management course for Guild ELL staff members to learn soft skills and management-level English to enhance the rate of internal promotions to leadership positions.
- Expand the size of the Board and proportion of diverse identities of Board members.
- Hire a transition specialist to advocate for DCF and DMH-referred youth to gain access to DDS Priority 1 Housing. This will help the longer term goal of improving the representation of diverse identities within The Guild's Adult Services' Program.
- Continue to review representative diversity ratios at all levels of the organization and report results for accountability.

CULTURE OF INCLUSION THROUGH COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Creating a culture of inclusion helps individuals feel psychologically safe to share thoughts, consider new ideas, and take risks, all of which are linked to greater innovation, productivity, and retention. One method of creating a culture of inclusion is to implement a collective leadership model of decision making. Collective leadership is a relational approach to organizational management in which multiple individuals assume leadership roles within a group. In turn, groups provide interdisciplinary leadership to the wider community. It is a transformational approach rooted in a commitment to inclusion and social justice.

Current Status

- The Guild has an ongoing relationship with Mass Advocates Standing Strong who offers the Self Advocacy Leadership Series (SALS) program, Awareness and Action training (abuse prevention), an annual conference and regional monthly self-advocacy meetings. More than 30 Guild individuals have graduated from the eight-week SALS program and many individuals and students attend the annual conference.
- The Parent/Guardian Advisory Groups have created their own charters and drive the content of meetings as well as shape agendas for larger parent trainings and supports.
- Guild supervisors have been trained in the Yale School of Medicine Supervision Model and meet monthly in cohorts to support professional development and group solidarity.
- Guild staff members are encouraged to participate in and chair professional learning communities within The Guild. Currently, there are 12 active committees comprised of at least 70 staff members.
- Members of The Guild's external community have been invited to holiday parties and celebrations at The Guild's residences and headquarters.

Annual Goals:

- Include individuals served at The Guild on professional learning committees, leadership hiring committees, planning groups, and orientation trainings.
- Provide individuals served at The Guild with self-advocacy training, at developmentally appropriate level, to advocate for and communicate issues that are important to them.
- Expand the involvement of the Parent/Family Advisory Committees to contribute to goals for programming improvement.
- Adopt curricula on sexual health, development, and gender identity for students, individuals, families, and staff.
- Begin structured conversations about diversity with staff, individuals, and families to garner new goals for improvement. These conversations should be reciprocal *with* all members of The Guild community rather than trainings directed *at* individuals.