

# How Providers Can Address Hate and Discrimination in Healthcare

We must recognize and act on discrimination, hate and racism in healthcare to make sure that everyone receives the right care in the right way. Here's how we can all contribute to creating more inclusive healthcare spaces and interactions:

## 1. Understand racism and other forms of discrimination

**See and Recognize:** Racism and discrimination happen in large and small ways and are not always visible. They can be clear in comments people make, but also subtle in the attitudes that influence how decisions get made (for example to provide a test or treatment, or access to a program). They can also be embedded in written or unwritten policies that guide how things are done.

### Examine and Correct:

- Look at the written and unwritten policies, care protocols/guidelines, and practices (what people actually do and say) for signs of discrimination against particular groups. Repairing these should be done with people from the impacted communities. This ensures that the voices and experiences of those most affected are central to identifying and addressing issues.
- Ask people about their experiences in your care setting in a safe and anonymous way. Service providers, family, friends, and other care staff should also be encouraged to report any stigmatizing and discriminatory care they receive or observe. If you're a patient getting poor care, ask how you can safely report it.
- When people in your care report feeling unsafe or discriminated against, ensure there are processes to address this, including follow-up with the person expressing concern.
- Correct written documents and educate staff grounded in the experiences shared by your patients.
- Ensure any new services, programs or policies start with anti-discrimination and anti-oppression principles and explicitly address cultural safety.

**Support reforms:** Advocate for changes where healthcare is given/received to ensure fairness and equity to help reduce the impact of racism and discrimination.



## 2. Embrace equity-promoting care

**Be trauma- and violence-informed:** Healthcare providers should use TVIC principles, understanding the effects of trauma and structural violence, including racism and discrimination, on people's health and well-being, prioritizing safety in care interactions, promoting agency, choice and collaboration, while identifying and building on people's strengths.

**Understand and implement cultural safety and humility:** All levels of the organization, and all staff, require facilitated education to address and enact cultural safety for providers and users of service. This education must itself be safe, especially for those staff experiencing racism and discrimination.

**Understand stigma:** Recognize how stigma, including self-stigma (feeling bad about yourself because you believe others think you're not good enough), can impact trust in health providers and the healthcare system, and in health outcomes.

**Consider a harm reduction philosophy in policies and practices:** Meet people where they are, working with them to understand what they're ready for, to prioritize their needs and find solutions in ways they want. Some behaviours and risks may not change right away but can be made less harmful. Ensure that this is reflected in policies, which can themselves do harm.

### 3. Raise awareness and educate

**Promote understanding:** Educate yourself and others about the impacts of hate and discrimination in healthcare. For leaders, ensure education on these issues is part of hiring and onboarding new staff and ongoing professional development.

**Foster respect:** Encourage a culture of respect and inclusion in all healthcare encounters and settings to ensure everyone feels valued and heard. Provide tools and resources, including time for discussions and debriefing, and reflective supervision, to support good practice and safety for all staff, especially those who belong to groups facing discrimination.

**Partner with other agencies:** Collaborate with other organizations to improve relationships with clients and deliver more comprehensive education on discrimination and inclusive practices. Partnering can enhance the effectiveness of training and support a more integrated approach to addressing these issues.



*For clients, every door into healthcare  
should be open, safe and inclusive.*

The following online resources are available:

### Resources

- [Anti-Indigenous racism resources for health professionals](#)
- [Canadian Human Right Commission – ‘Discussion Paper on Systemic Racism’ \(audio available\)](#)
- [Canadian Human Right Commission – ‘Anti-Racism & Organizational Change: A Guide for Employers’ \(audio available\)](#)
- [Guide to Allyship](#)
- [Responding to Discrimination in the Workplace, EQUIP Healthcare \(practice tool\)](#)
- [SafeSpace Networks Provider Reporting \(anonymous\)](#)