

CASA of Yellowstone County Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION STATEMENT:

CASA of Yellowstone County aspires to develop, promote, and sustain a culture and reputation for being an organization grounded in equity that leverages diversity and inclusion.

Human capital is CASA of Yellowstone County's most valuable asset. The collective sum of the individual differences, life experiences, knowledge, inventiveness, innovation, self-expression, unique capabilities, and talent that volunteers, employees, and board of directors invest in their work represents a significant part of the organizational culture, reputation, and the organization's achievement. Every person brings a unique perspective and experience to advance our mission of advocating for a safe and permanent home for abused and neglected children in Yellowstone County.

CASA of Yellowstone County embraces and encourages volunteers' and employees' differences in gender identity or expression, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, sexual orientation, physical ability, neurodiversity, socio-economic status, and other characteristics that make employees and volunteers who they are.

Disproportionality has long been evident in the child welfare system. Compared to their peers, children and families involved in the foster care system are less likely to encounter caseworkers, service providers, lawyers, judges, or CASAs who share their race or ethnicity. Children in foster care face fear of family separation and experience significant barriers to accessing educational, health, and housing services.

CASA of Yellowstone County believes a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization is innovative and successful in advocating for children and families.

DEFINITIONS:

- ❖ **Diversity:** All the ways in which people differ in relation to one another, including, but not limited to race, gender, age, national origin, self-identification, religion, abilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, neurodiversity, and physical appearance.
- ❖ **Equity:** The ongoing practice of recognition and removal of implicit and explicit barriers and bias within procedures, processes, and distribution of resources in service of a world of shared prosperity and social justice.
- ❖ **Inclusion:** The act of creating safe and welcoming environments in which every person can be and feel invited, respected, supported, and valued to participate fully and meaningfully.

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN GOALS:

The purpose of this DEI Action Plan is to lay the foundation for CASA of Yellowstone County to fulfill our commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. This plan outlines the necessary actions and best practices to live out the shared vision of a more equitable and inclusive organizational culture. The plan will be reviewed by the governing board annually and updated every three years. By monitoring and tracking the DEI-focused activities, CASA of Yellowstone County will be better positioned to carry out the mission while intentionally supporting volunteers, employees, board of directors, and the children and families served.

The DEI Strategic Action Plan Commitments are Organizational, Work Environment and Culture, and Learning and Development. The goals are guided by the DEI Statement. A systemic approach is taken in the tracking and monitoring of progress to ensure a sustained and collective commitment towards:

Organizational Commitment: Commit to fostering a culture that values the diversity of volunteers, employees, board members, children, and families, and seek to promote equitable and inclusive policies and practices by:

- ❖ Working closely with community leaders to ensure CASA of Yellowstone County is taking steps forward to create a positive change and be a culturally responsive, equitable, and inclusive organization.
- ❖ Building a culture of belonging; uniting different backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences in an environment where everyone feels valued and works together to achieve greater outcomes, reflect the diversity of the Yellowstone community, and advance the mission of CASA of Yellowstone County.
- ❖ Ensuring advocacy includes both empowerment and protection of children, regardless of gender identity or expression, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, sexual orientation, physical ability, neurodiversity, and/or socio-economic status.
- ❖ Championing and advocating for justice and equity in child welfare to build a better future for all children.
- ❖ Advocating for children's wishes, best interests, and permanency, to keep them safe and create a future where children have an opportunity to thrive.
- ❖ Exploring potential underlying, unquestioned assumptions and biases that interfere with inclusiveness.
- ❖ Treating others with dignity, respect, and acceptance. All volunteers, employees, and board members are expected to exhibit conduct that reflects inclusion while representing CASA of Yellowstone County (i.e., during employee work hours, advocacy duties, organization-sponsored events, etc).

Work Environment and Culture Commitment: Establish CASA of Yellowstone County as an organization known for its efforts in diversity, equity, and inclusion by:

- ❖ Challenging assumptions about what it takes to be a leader at our organization and who is well-positioned to provide leadership.
- ❖ Ensuring policies, procedures, systems, programs, and services are written to support diversity, equity, and inclusion, and updating and reporting organization progress through transparent communication.
- ❖ Building collaborative relationships with diverse organizations and members of the community to recruit a diverse board of directors, volunteers, and employees who are representative of the Yellowstone County community.
- ❖ Integrating values and behaviors into organizational operations so volunteers, employees, and board of directors feel comfortable and supported in making decisions and empowered to participate in the decision-making process.
- ❖ Ensuring volunteer, employee, and board of director voices are represented in shaping organizational culture.
- ❖ Being aware of and working to decrease or eliminate underlying, unquestioned assumptions and bias that interfere with inclusiveness during the hiring, promoting, and evaluating process.
- ❖ Utilizing an onboarding and orientation process for new volunteers, employees, and board of directors that creates a welcoming atmosphere and includes a briefing on the commitment to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan.
- ❖ Compensating employees competitively through salary, benefits, and other amenities that are culturally sensitive and appeal to a diverse workforce.
- ❖ Including a salary range with all job postings.
- ❖ Committing time and resources to expand diverse leadership within volunteers, employees, and the board of directors.
- ❖ Advocating for, and supporting, board-level thinking about how systemic inequities impact our organization's work, and how to address identified inequities in a way that is consistent with CASA of Yellowstone County's mission.

Learning and Development Commitment: Fully integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into our learning and development by:

- ❖ Pursuing cultural humility throughout the organization by offering substantive learning opportunities.
- ❖ Educating all volunteers, employees, and board of directors on the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion through annual training opportunities.
- ❖ Engaging in collaborative efforts with the Montana state CASA/GAL and National CASA/GAL organization to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- ❖ Assessing and providing equitable training opportunities to meet current and future organizational needs.
- ❖ Identifying and implementing equitable opportunities for mentoring, leadership training, and growth for volunteers, employees, and board of directors.
- ❖ Assessing and accommodating individual learning needs and settings.

Adopted by Board of Directors on _____

- ❖ Providing professional development for all employees and volunteers including goal setting, coaching, and evaluation. This includes a progressive discipline policy with opportunities for improvement, feedback, and support.