

Colorado Legal Services



Legal help for low-income Coloradans seeking assistance with civil legal needs

www.coloradolegalservices.org

CLS DEI Committee Vision and Values Statement*

Vision and Values Statement

CLS is a non-profit legal organization that values and is committed to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-oppression within its organization, the legal system, and client communities. This commitment extends to staff, the union, volunteers, Board of Directors, organizations and communities with which CLS partners and those whom CLS works with and serves.

CLS acknowledges the existence of oppressive systems and the impact of systemic inequalities on marginalized communities. Oppression is and has been embedded in our laws and legal system, which decrease access to justice and resources for Colorado's marginalized communities. CLS is committed to dismantling oppressive barriers experienced by so many when seeking justice. We envision a fair, just, trusted, and harm reductionist legal system which emphasizes access to and implementation of true justice for every Coloradan.

To ensure that CLS becomes a leader among legal organizations in Colorado in anti-oppression, diversity, equity, and inclusion, the CLS DEI Committee will set priorities, develop goals, and identify timeframes in which to achieve those priorities and goals.

In Relation to Serving Clients

CLS will continue to advance DEI when representing its clients by

- Providing equal program access to non-English speakers.
- Incorporating inclusive intake practices that acknowledge the diversity of CLS' client population
- Meeting clients where they are by understanding their unique backgrounds to better provide holistic, trauma informed, and culturally sensitive legal representation.
- **Provide services that acknowledge and combat systemic issues within the legal system to help our clients understand and feel empowered to navigate the system.**

In Relation to Partners

CLS understands that providing high quality representation requires working with partners in the community. CLS will continue to collaborate closely with our partners by:

- Sharing experiences and resources to learn about and address issues of inequity between shared client populations.
- Fostering and strengthening new and existing community partnerships, especially with grassroots and non-profit groups, that better represent and connect CLS to the client communities it serves.
- Working with both legal and non-legal partners to help CLS better reach its client communities and to better provide more holistic services to clients.

In Relation to the Greater Legal System

CLS recognizes the disproportionate harmful impact that the legal system imposes on people of color, low income and working class people, people with disabilities, the LGBTIQ+ community, and other historically marginalized communities. We strive to dismantle this harmful impact created by the system by:

- Advocating for accessibility to the court systems by vocalizing issues of accessibility to the Court and by helping the court recognize and develop alternatives that foster greater access.
- **Encourage and support CLS staff to participate in Access to Justice groups and other local and statewide groups that work to implement changes.**
- **Being a positive model to the courts by representing our missions and values through the ways we communicate and interact with others.**
- Developing relevant and meaningful resources and materials for applicants and clients as they relate to the court system and their cases

In Relation to Internal Practices

CLS is currently working to dismantle systemic racism, implicit bias, micro aggressions, and inequality within our organization by evaluating and rebuilding our internal practices including:

- Developing guidelines, updated application and interviewing materials, and recruitment goals to promote equity and diversity in recruitment, hiring and retention of CLS staff at all levels.
- **Analyzing salary structures to ensure more** equitable wages and compensation for people of color and other minority groups and that compensate staff with specific skills needed by CLS, including language skills.
- Providing ongoing training on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- **Implement methods and tools of communication between staff, management, the union, and the CLS DEI consultant to facilitate open and cooperative conversations around DEI challenges and solutions.**
- Identify and advocate for changes to CLS' internal practices and policies that perpetuate systemic inequity and which prevent CLS from providing a safe and supportive work environment for all staff.
- Develop these same recommendations and guidelines for both Union Leadership and Management because of the unique organizational structure of CLS.
- **Organize and create affinity groups with policies that support staff participation.**

CLS and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee will hold itself accountable by regularly evaluating and measuring its progress toward achieving its adopted priorities and goals. CLS has also engaged the services of an accountability partner, Regan Byrd Consulting LLC, to provide additional anti-oppressive expertise and oversight on progress and impact.

*These statements are from CLS' DEI Committee and are not an official policy of CLS.

Printed: October 6, 2022

<http://www.coloradolegalservices.org/node/91/cls-dei-committee-vision-and-values-statement>

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