Intersectional Accessibility Policy

At The Marie Equi Center, we are committed to providing a welcoming, accessible, and inclusive environment for everyone. Our Intersectional Accessibility Policy is designed to meet and exceed the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) while also addressing the diverse needs of individuals across multiple dimensions, including physical, sensory, digital, cultural, and emotional accessibility. We recognize that accessibility is a critical component of equity, and we strive to create an environment where all staff, volunteers, and community members can fully participate and thrive.

1. COVID-19 Safety and Accessibility Protocols

We understand that COVID-19 presents unique challenges for accessibility and safety. Our COVID-19 policies are designed to protect the health and well-being of everyone while being responsive to diverse health and access needs.

- **COVID-19 Staff Sheet**: We maintain a comprehensive COVID-19 staff sheet that outlines protocols for symptom screening, masking, social distancing, and remote work options. This document is reviewed regularly to reflect evolving public health guidelines and feedback from staff.
- **Day Center COVID-19 Policies**: To ensure a safe and accessible environment for all, our Day Center COVID-19 policies include:
    - Masking requirements in shared spaces, with accommodations for individuals who cannot wear masks due to sensory sensitivities or disabilities.
    - Social distancing protocols and reconfiguration of communal areas to

allow for spacing.

- Enhanced cleaning and sanitizing procedures, as well as the availability of hand sanitizers and air purifiers.
- Flexible service delivery options, including remote and low-contact alternatives for those at higher risk or with specific health concerns.

2. ADA Compliance and Accommodations

We are committed to full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and any applicable state or local regulations regarding accessibility. Our goal is to go beyond compliance by actively creating a work environment that is inclusive of all individuals, regardless of ability.

- **Reasonable Accommodations**: We provide reasonable accommodations for employees and volunteers with disabilities to ensure equal access to employment, services, and participation. Accommodations may include modifications to workspaces, adjustments to work schedules, assistive devices, and more.
- **Requesting Accommodations**: Employees and volunteers can request accommodations by contacting their direct supervisor or any member of the leadership team. All requests are handled confidentially, and we work collaboratively with each individual to provide effective and supportive solutions.

3. Accessible Workspace Design

We recognize that physical accessibility is essential for creating a welcoming and inclusive environment. Our approach to workspace design prioritizes comfort, accessibility, and flexibility.

- **Ergonomic and Accessible Workstations**: We provide adjustable desks, ergonomic seating, and accessible workstations for individuals with larger bodies, mobility needs or sensory sensitivities.
- **Quiet and Sensory-Friendly Spaces**: To support individuals with sensory processing needs, we offer quiet rooms, low-stimulation areas, and private workspaces. These spaces are available for use during work hours and community programming.
- **Accessible Communal Areas**: Communal areas, such as restrooms, break rooms, and meeting spaces, are designed to be accessible to individuals using mobility devices. We ensure that doorways, hallways, and seating arrangements are wide enough to accommodate all mobility aids.

4. Digital and Communication Accessibility

Digital and communication accessibility is crucial for ensuring that everyone can engage with our work and mission. Our practices are designed to eliminate barriers and support a variety of communication needs.

- **Inclusive Communication Practices**: We use plain language, accessible fonts, and high-contrast text in all internal and external communications. Documents are provided in alternative formats (e.g., large print, braille, audio) upon request to support diverse needs.
- **Screen Reader Compatibility**: All digital materials and online resources are designed to be compatible with screen readers, and we provide accessible website navigation options.
- **Virtual Meeting Accessibility**: During virtual meetings, we offer closed captioning and visual descriptions for individuals with hearing, vision, or cognitive disabilities. Additionally, we maintain a camera-optional policy to support sensory accessibility and privacy needs.

5. Sensory Accommodations

We understand that sensory accessibility is vital for creating an inclusive and supportive environment. Our sensory accommodations include:

- **Low-Stimulation Areas**: Quiet rooms and low-stimulation spaces are available for staff and community members who may be overstimulated by noise, light, or other environmental factors.
- **Flexible Lighting and Noise Management**: We offer adjustable lighting and noise-dampening measures to support individuals with sensory processing needs. Staff and volunteers are encouraged to personalize their workspace environments to reduce overstimulation.

6. Flexible Working Options

We recognize that accessibility also means providing flexibility in how and where work is performed. Our flexible working options include:

- **Remote and Hybrid Work Options**: Employees (with the exception of direct service workers) have the option to work remotely or in a hybrid capacity, based on their role and personal needs. This flexibility is designed to support staff who may face barriers to traditional in-office work.
- **Flexible Scheduling**: Employees can request adjustments to their work schedules to accommodate caregiving responsibilities, health needs, or other accessibility considerations.

7. Neurodiversity Inclusion

We are committed to creating an inclusive environment that recognizes and celebrates neurodiversity. Our policies and practices are designed to support the unique needs of neurodivergent employees and volunteers.

- **Neurodivergence-Affirming Practices**: We provide accommodations such as flexible communication methods, reduced sensory input, and adjustments to work expectations to support individuals with ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and other forms of neurodivergence.
- **Neurodiversity Training**: Staff receive training on neurodiversity and how to create a supportive and inclusive environment for neurodivergent colleagues and community members.

8. Cultural and Linguistic Accessibility

Cultural and linguistic accessibility is key to ensuring that our organization is welcoming to people from diverse backgrounds and identities.

- **Multilingual Resources**: We provide resources, materials, and communications in multiple languages based on staff and community needs. Interpreter services are available for meetings, events, and trainings as needed.
- **Culturally Responsive Practices**: Our practices are designed to honor cultural traditions, religious observances, and community-specific needs. This includes flexibility for cultural holidays, dietary accommodations, and creating spaces that reflect and respect the cultural identities of all.

9. Emotional and Psychological Accessibility

Creating an emotionally and psychologically safe environment is foundational to our approach to accessibility. We are committed to implementing trauma-informed practices and providing mental health support.

- **Trauma-Informed Policies**: All staff are trained in trauma-informed practices, which include maintaining empathy, respecting boundaries, and responding supportively to signs of distress.
- **Mental Health Support and Resources**: We provide access to mental health resources and mental health days to support emotional well-being.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

We recognize that accessibility is an ongoing process and that needs may change over time. We are committed to regularly reviewing and updating our Intersectional Accessibility Policy based on staff feedback, evolving best practices, and changes in regulations.

Reporting Accessibility Concerns

If you have questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding accessibility at The Marie Equi Center, please contact your direct supervisor or any member of the leadership team. All feedback will be handled confidentially, and we are committed to responding promptly and effectively.