

1.3 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

LawNY is committed not only to legal compliance but to fostering a workplace and service environment that ensures equal opportunity to all individuals who interact with our organization, including employees, applicants, interns, volunteers, contractors, Board members, and clients. Equal opportunity means that all decisions and services are provided fairly without regard to any legally protected characteristics. LawNY complies with all equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination requirements of all federal, state, local, Legal Services Corporation and other applicable requirements and laws.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all individuals who interact with LawNY, whether seeking employment, employed by LawNY, serving on the Board of Directors, or receiving legal services, are treated fairly, respectfully and without discrimination. This includes identifying and removing barriers to opportunities and fostering an environment where all individuals are safe, valued, respected, supported, and free from discrimination.

The Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Policy applies to:

- All employees (full-time, part-time, and temporary)
- Applicants of employment, services, and contracts
- Interns, volunteers, and contractors
- All clients and prospective clients receiving legal services
- All members of LawNY's Board of Directors

All individuals covered under this policy must refrain from engaging in unlawful discrimination and are expected to treat others with fairness, dignity, and respect.

1.3.1 Prohibited Discrimination

LawNY prohibits unlawful discrimination based on any legally protected characteristic, actual or perceived, including but not limited to:

- Sex, gender, pregnancy, gender identity, or gender expression
 - Race, color, national origin, citizenship, or ancestry
 - Religion or creed
 - Age
 - Physical or mental disability
 - Marital status or parental status
 - Military status
 - Domestic violence victim status
 - Genetic predisposition or carrier status
 - Sexual orientation
 - Parental status
 - Prior criminal record
 - Any other status protected by law
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Prohibited actions include, but are not limited to:

- Unfair treatment because of protected characteristics.
- Harassment by managers, co-workers, or others in the workplace based on any protected characteristic.
- Denial of reasonable workplace accommodations needed due to religious beliefs or disability.
- Improper inquiries or disclosure of genetic or medical information.
- Retaliation against anyone who complains about discrimination or participates in an investigation or legal proceeding regarding discrimination.

1.3.2 Equal Access to Legal Services

Non-Discrimination in Service

No client will be denied legal assistance, provided unequal services, or evaluated differently for eligibility *due to a protected characteristic*.

Accessibility

Offices must be accessible to clients with disabilities whenever feasible. If an office cannot be made accessible, services will be provided at an alternative accessible site or at the client's residence or another mutually agreed-upon location.

1.3.3 Equal Opportunity in Employment

Recruitment

LawNY seeks qualified applicants for all positions. Job postings will include the LawNY Equal Opportunity Statement and will be advertised through diverse job posting outlets to reach a broad applicant pool. The Executive Director has the authority to confidentially post key positions and identify internal candidates for succession planning purposes.

Hiring, Placement, and Promotion

Decisions are based on qualifications, performance, and organizational needs. Employees will be informed of all available opportunities.

Compensation and Benefits

All pay, benefits, and access to training or educational programs are administered equitably.

1.3.4 Oversight and implementation

Responsibility

The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for the equal opportunity program. The Executive Director is responsible for day-to-day implementation, monitoring, and compliance.

Monitoring and Reporting

The Executive Director reviews operations and maintains statistical data to ensure policies are followed and submits required reports to the Board of Directors.

Policy Review

Policies and procedures will be reviewed periodically to identify any gaps or barriers and will be updated as needed.

1.3.5 Complaint Procedures

Internal Complaints:

Employees, applicants, Board members, who believe this policy has been violated should file a complaint under LawNY's Non-Harassment and Discrimination Policy. Clients who believe this policy has been violated should file a complaint under LawNY's Client Complaint Policy in accordance with 45 CFR 1621.

External Complaints:

Complaints may also be filed with external agencies, including:

- **New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS):** civilrights@dcjs.ny.gov or 80 South Swan Street, Albany, NY 12210
- **U.S. Department of Justice Office for Civil Rights (OCR):** www.justice.gov/actioncenter/submit-complaint

Protection from Retaliation:

Retaliation against any individual filing a complaint or participating in an investigation is prohibited. Any employee who participates in retaliatory behavior is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING

All employees receive and are required to acknowledge receipt of this Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination policy during onboarding through LawNY's HRIS platform BambooHR. During onboarding with HR, the Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination policy is reviewed. The policy is also included in the employee handbook and is made available to clients, applicants, interns, and volunteers upon request. Staff will receive periodic training to reinforce compliance and awareness of equal opportunity principles.
