

## **Employment Policies**

### **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICIES**

The Agency hereby affirms compliance with the equal opportunity policy and standard of the Department of Workforce Development, Department of Health Services, and all applicable state and federal statutes and regulations relating to nondiscrimination in employment and service delivery.

The Agency hereby affirms compliance with the equal opportunity policy and standard of the Department of Workforce Development, Department of Health Services, and all applicable state and federal statutes and regulations relating to nondiscrimination in employment and service delivery.

### **EMPLOYMENT**

No qualified person shall be excluded from employment, promotions, trainings, compensation, or be denied the benefits of employment or otherwise be subject to discrimination in employment in any manner on the basis of age, race, religion, color, sex, national origin or ancestry, disability or association with a person with a disability, arrest or conviction record, sexual orientation, marital status or pregnancy, political belief, or affiliation, military participation, or use or non use of lawful products off the employers premises during working hours. All employees are expected to support Independence*First* goals and programmatic activities relating to nondiscrimination of employment and assist in meeting its objective.

### **SERVICE**

No qualified applicant for service or service participant shall be excluded from participation, be denied benefits, or otherwise be subject to discrimination in any manner on the basis of race, color, national origin or ancestry, sex, religion, age, political belief or affiliation, disability or association with a person with a disability. This policy covers eligibility for the access to service delivery, and treatment in all of the programs and activities.

### **PROMOTING DIVERSITY**

Independence*First* values and promotes diversity in its workplace. Diversity refers to human differences, including those based on culture, ethnicity, gender, age, and disabilities that exist in the workforce. Independence*First* believes that promoting

diversity plays an important role in attracting the widest pool of qualified applicants, fostering greater innovation and creativity, and enhancing our communication and relationships with consumers and the community.

Independence*First* is committed to enhancing our diversity and demonstrating that commitment to our employees, consumers, and community. Independence*First* promotes diversity by developing policies, programs, and procedures that foster a work environment in which differences are respected and employees are treated fairly.

### **STATEMENT ON RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION**

It is the policy of the Agency to work for and support Equal Opportunity for all and to seek to promote Metropolitan Milwaukee as a most desirable place for all of its residents to live. In order to achieve this goal it is necessary to address issues such as racism and discrimination that limit access to education, health care, employment and housing.

The Agency believes that in order to enhance the quality of life for all Metropolitan Milwaukee residents, it must work toward ending those practices, behaviors and attitudes that contribute to racism and other forms of discrimination. The Agency promotes increased opportunities for all people to participate in our community and to live together harmoniously with mutual understanding and respect.

### **RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLAN**

The Human Resources Director of Independence*First* is responsible for implementing, auditing and evaluating the effectiveness of the Affirmative Action Plan, which includes:

- a. Assuring equal opportunities for employment, promotion and career development for all staff
- b. Marketing the programs and services of the organization in a manner conforming to this plan
- c. Designing and implementing reporting, auditing and evaluating systems that will measure the status and effectiveness of the Affirmative Action Plan.

### **COMMUNICATION OF POLICY AND PLAN**

#### **Internal**

This plan will be incorporated in the Agency`s personnel policies, a copy of which will be given to all employees. In addition, this commitment and its implementation will be communicated to the staff at staff meetings and staff trainings.

#### **External**

The Agency's commitment to equal employment opportunity and affirmative action is communicated in the following ways:

- a. Notification of policy in writing to employment recruiting sources. These include the media, daily newspapers, and employment agencies.
- b. Specific notification to resources aware of persons with disabilities seeking employment.
- c. Incorporation of equal opportunity and affirmative action policy statement in purchase orders and contracts.
- d. Incorporation of equal opportunity and affirmative action policy statement in application for employment and staff recruitment forms.
- e. Incorporation of equal opportunity and affirmative statement in annual reports and brochures.

### **LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP) POLICY**

IndependenceFirst is committed to providing equal opportunity in all programs and services to ensure full compliance with all civil rights laws, including Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which requires non-discrimination on the basis of national origin. Equal opportunity includes physical and program access for persons with disabilities and program access for persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Program and physical access for persons with disabilities is covered in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, Section 504.

It is the policy of this Agency to provide language access services to populations of persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) who are eligible to be served by our programs. Such services will be focused on providing meaningful access to our programs, services and/or benefits.

### **DEFINITIONS**

The following definitions and other provisions are applicable to this policy:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq. and its implementing regulation at 45 CFR part 80 - The law that protects individuals from discrimination based on their race, color, or national origin under any program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance.
  - Limited English Proficiency (LEP) those consumers, who cannot speak, read, write, or understand the English language at a level that permits them to interact effectively with program service providers.
  - Vital documents - A document, paper or electronic, that contains information that is critical for accessing the provider/agency services and/or benefits; letters or notices that require a response from the

consumer; and documents that inform consumers of free language assistance.

Safe Harbor - The threshold that permits programs to decide when a written translation is required in order to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

- The following are considered thresholds: Written translation of agency vital documents will be provided for each eligible language group that represents 5% or 1,000 individuals in our service area, whichever is less, will be provided for the population of persons with disabilities and/or family members/caregivers eligible to be served by our programs.
- If there are fewer than 50 persons in a language group, the provider does not translate vital written materials, but gives written notice in the primary language of the LEP group of their right to oral interpretation of those written materials, free of cost.
- Major LEP Language Groups - The populations of persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in Wisconsin that represents 5% or 1,000 individuals in the service area. For Wisconsin, the Statewide Major LEP Language Groups are Spanish and Hmong.
- Qualified Interpreters - Qualified interpreters have: demonstrated proficiency in English and the second language; demonstrated knowledge in both languages of relevant specialized terms or concepts; and documentation of completion of training on the skills and ethics of interpretation, and awareness of relevant cultural issues.
- Interactive Voice Response - (IVR System) an automated system that enables callers to obtain and provide information over the telephone in English and other languages.

## **LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY COORDINATOR**

A Limited English Proficiency Coordinator (LEPC) has been appointed at the management level to oversee the LEP requirements and procedures, including as required by funding recipients. LEP planning and services are provided in coordination with provisions of equal opportunity in services and employment. The Human Resources Director is the agency management level Limited English Proficiency Coordinator, who may be contacted at (414) 291-7520 ext. 8313. The back up LEP Coordinator is the Associate Director, who may be contacted at (414) 291-7520 ext. 8302

## **ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING**

LEP populations to be served will be assessed on an annual basis and the major language groups identified. Following the assessment, a plan and related procedures and

requirements will be developed to meet the needs of eligible or encountered populations and assure compliance with the agency's LEP policy. The current languages available are: English, Spanish, Russian and Hmong.

## **MONITORING**

Regular monitoring of the plan will be conducted in accordance with the agency's monitoring procedures.

## **WRITTEN NOTICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS RIGHTS**

**Language access statements shall inform LEP clients of their rights as follows:**

- Their right to qualified interpreter services at no cost to them.
- Their right not to be required to rely on their minor children, other relatives, or friends as interpreters.
- Their right to file a grievance about the language access services provided them.

**Written language access rights will be distributed in the major LEP languages through the following methods:**

- Posting of signs in lobbies and waiting areas
- Customer orientations
- Statements in appeal notices
- Statements in brochures, booklets, outreach, recruitment information and other materials that are routinely disseminated to the public.

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY AND DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT POSTINGS**

The Equal Opportunity Policy and Discrimination Complaint Process will be posted in plain view in the major languages in every service area or point of customer contact, i.e., reception or customer waiting areas.

## **INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION**

### **WRITTEN TRANSLATION**

Written translation of agency vital documents will be provided for each eligible language group that represents 5% or 1,000 individuals in our service area, whichever is less. If there are fewer than 50 persons in a language group, the provider does not translate vital written materials, but gives written notice in the primary language of the LEP group of their right to oral interpretation of those written materials, free of cost. The provision of written translation of agency documents, including vital documents, will be in accordance with an annual agency plan that addresses costs and priorities.

### **ORAL INTERPRETATION**

Oral interpreters will be offered to customers in a timely manner free of charge. Services offered to LEP customers will be documented in appropriate records.

### **ACQUIRING TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION SERVICES**

Resources and procedures for obtaining oral interpretation and written translation will be made available to program staff.

Agency staffs that need to request an oral translator or written translation need to see their supervisor for procedure and authorization purposes.

### **COMPETENCY OF INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS**

Qualified interpreters and translators will be utilized to provide services. Interpreters and translators will be screened for appropriate training and cultural sensitivity, and will be required to comply with agency confidentiality policies and Code of Ethics when interpreting or translating.

### **OTHER COMMUNICATION METHODS**

Interactive Voice Response Systems, voicemail, web pages, posters, videos, and media used will be made accessible to LEP populations in accordance with the agency's plan to translate vital documents and other materials. Electronic systems and computer-generated notices will be made accessible to LEP populations in accordance with the agency's plan to translate vital documents and other materials.

### **TRAINING**

Training will be made available to agency staff and funding recipients.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Community outreach to the major LEP groups served by the agency's programs will be conducted to ensure LEP customers have equal access to services.

## **CODE OF ETHICS**

The primary obligation of the Independence*First* staff is to uphold this policy and act in a manner that is legal, ethical, and moral to consumer(s) and everyone served.

Independence*First*'s expectations are that all staff:

- Respect each individual's integrity and freedom of choice. Remember that every individual has his/ her own value system and freedom of choice in lifestyles and opinions.
- Be respectful of the personal details and responsibilities inherent in their working relationships. Staff will maintain the confidentiality of privileged information at all times and respect the privacy of the consumer(s).
- Do not engage in any behavior that puts the consumer's health and well being at risk. This including but not limited to sexual contact, serving consumers with which they have had previous sexual or intimate contact, as well as, sexual, physical, emotional and financial abuses.
- Do not have any type of financial exchange with consumers, including but not limited to accepting money for services, giving or loaning money to consumers.
- Do not use your relationship with consumers to meet your personal needs. Place the consumer's interest above your own. Explain to consumers the purpose, goals and limitations of the staff/consumer relationship and do not act in ways that exploit the trust and dependency of the consumers served.
- Do not engage in conduct that constitutes a conflict of interest or that will adversely reflect on the agency. Every attempt will be made to resolve conflicts in a manner that will not adversely affect the service delivery to the consumer.
- Do not accept gifts of value from a consumer. Gifts should be declined unless declining will negatively affect the staff/consumer relationship, in this case the gift should be turned over to Independence*First*.
- Report any staff that violates this Code of Ethics to immediate supervisor and/or Director of Human Resources.

## **E-VERIFY**

Federal law requires all employers to verify the identity and employment eligibility of all persons hired to work in the United States. Independence*First* complies with this federal requirement and is a participant of E-Verify.

Social Security Administration and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security oversee E-Verify. Independence*First* provides E-Verify with the information obtained on all new employees' I-9 form. Independence*First* uses E-Verify as a screening method to ensure the documentation presented is valid.