

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Policy Statement of MEHAR (Approval: August 2026)

MEHAR (Mental and Emotional Health Awareness Renaissance) is a nonprofit organization incorporated in 2018. MEHAR is committed to creating awareness around mental health through art. Our organization operates on the core belief that art has a power to heal and stimulate our minds. Our projects aim to utilize the power of art to bring change and transformation. We have created projects in various forms of art including theatrical projects, film production, creative writing and music projects. Our mission is to create individual and community awareness of well-being through various art forms.

Introduction

This policy is a reflection of MEHAR's commitment to promoting mental well-being and awareness through art. We believe that art has the power to remove stigma around mental illness and foster greater acceptance. This policy serves to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and competency in all aspects of MEHAR. Our EDI policy embeds our core values: Empathy & Compassion, Partnership & Collaboration, Innovation & Creativity, Inclusivity & Integrity. We believe in building and nurturing the community that welcomes people from all backgrounds as we recognize the significance of EDI in our mental wellbeing.

MEHAR operates in Ontario and mostly serves the Region of Peel, Halton and the GTA. These are Canada's most diverse and multicultural regions. As our projects are artistic and educational, diversity is at the heart of our projects. We create opportunities that are accessible and available to people from all backgrounds. The objectives of this policy are to address issues such as exclusion on any basis, and power and privilege which prevent inclusion. We promote participation, and remove and reduce barriers in access and opportunities.

Our Commitment

As an organization, we are committed to the principles of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in all aspects of our work. We strongly believe that equity, diversity and inclusion play vital roles in our mental, emotional and social wellbeing and therefore MEHAR is committed to ensure we foster a culture where all feel accepted and empowered. We promote practices that embrace Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. We recognize that EDI is not only a fundamental human right but also essential for achieving our mission of promoting mental well-being and awareness through art. We firmly believe that diverse perspectives and experiences enrich our work and help us better serve our community.

MEHAR is committed to meeting the accessibility needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and to doing so in a way that respects dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity. We are committed to compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11), with particular attention to the Information and Communications Standard and to the customer service requirements governing how we communicate with and serve the public. We recognize that people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by barriers to mental health information and support, and that accessible communication is therefore central to — not separate from — our mission.

Guiding Principles

Equity: We strive to ensure that everyone, regardless of their background, has equal access to our programs, services, and opportunities. We are committed to addressing disparities and creating a level playing field for all individuals, particularly those affected by mental health challenges.

Diversity: We celebrate diversity in all its forms, including but not limited to age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, abilities, and mental health experiences. We believe that diverse voices and perspectives are essential for fostering creativity and innovation.

Inclusion: We are dedicated to creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and heard. We actively seek out and amplify marginalized voices and actively work to remove barriers to participation.

Accessibility: We are committed to designing our communications, materials, and programs so that people with disabilities can find, understand, and take part in our work on equal terms. We treat accessibility as a design practice rather than an accommodation of last resort: wherever possible we build access into our materials from the outset, and we remain ready to provide accessible formats and communication support on request. We recognize that disability includes non-apparent disabilities, including mental health and cognitive disabilities, and we do not require proof of disability as a condition of accommodation.

Implementation

In order to promote the culture that ensures equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, MEHAR is committed to comply with the following practices in every aspect of operations:

- We will commit to accountability, transparency and integrity to partake in creating an equitable community.
- We will make ongoing efforts and improvements that demonstrate leadership and accountability with respect to diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and equity.
- We will recognize and support EDI initiatives as a critical component of our projects.
- We will ensure that diversity is reflected and considered throughout all aspects and levels of the organization.
- We will recruit board members, artists, volunteers and staff members that reflect the mosaic of diversity in ethnicity, religions, cultures, race, sexual orientation, genders, and languages, and age.
- In alignment with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Ontario's Human Rights Code, MEHAR is committed to building an environment free of discrimination.
- We ensure the involvement of all members at all levels of the organization including staff, community members, and board members in active engagement of relevant policies and procedures to further build, sustain, and maintain EDI as a key priority.
- We conduct regular board meetings and maintain transparency through declaration of conflict of interest as one of the agenda items for each meeting.

Accessible Communication and Information

- We will provide our information and program materials in accessible formats and with communication support on request, at no additional cost beyond what any other person would pay, and in a timeframe that takes the person's accessibility needs into account. We will consult with the person making the request on the format or support that is suitable to them. Available formats include large print, plain text, electronic text compatible with screen readers, and audio.
- We will write our public-facing materials in plain language wherever the subject permits.
- We will provide captions for all video content we publish, and will make transcripts available for recorded audio, podcast, and video content on request.

- We will include descriptive alternative text for meaningful images posted on our website and social media channels, and will avoid conveying essential information through images alone.
- We will take reasonable steps to bring the MEHAR website into conformance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, excluding live captioning and pre-recorded audio descriptions, and will consider accessibility requirements when procuring or redeveloping digital tools.

Accessible Programs and Venues

- MEHAR does not own or control any physical premises. Where we deliver programming in rented, borrowed, or partner-controlled venues, we will make reasonable efforts to select venues with accessible features, and we will request accessibility information from the venue operator in advance.
- We acknowledge that responsibility for the physical accessibility of a venue rests with the operator of that venue. Where a venue does not meet a participant's access needs, MEHAR will work with the participant and the venue operator to identify reasonable alternatives within our control, which may include virtual participation, relocation, or the provision of materials in advance.
- We welcome service animals and support persons at our programs and events, where reasonably possible and subject to the rules of the venue. Where a support person is required for a participant to attend, MEHAR will not charge the support person an admission fee for MEHAR-hosted events.

Feedback

- MEHAR welcomes feedback on the accessibility of our communications, materials, and programs. Feedback may be submitted by email, by mail, by telephone, or verbally to any MEHAR representative at an event. Contact details are published on meharcanada.org.
- We will provide accessible formats and communication support for the feedback process on request.
- We will acknowledge feedback and respond within a reasonable period, and will use feedback received to inform improvements to this policy and to our practices.

Accountability for the Policy

Board members, the Executive Director, and all other personnel, artists, and volunteers will model behavior that is consistent with best EDI and accessibility practices. MEHAR will be accountable to all its stakeholders for upholding the intent, spirit, and purpose of this policy through board and any other appropriate forums.

The Board of Directors holds ultimate responsibility for this policy. This policy will be reviewed at least once every three years, or earlier if legislation, funder requirements, or feedback received indicates that revision is warranted. The outcome of each review will be recorded in the minutes of the Board.

This policy is available to the public on meharcanada.org and will be provided in an accessible format or with communication support on request.