

Policy Number CM8.030	Policy Section Communications	Effective: March 24, 2025
Title: Respectful Engagement Policy		Executive Sponsor: Vice President, Governance & Communications

Summary

This policy explains Community Living BC's (CLBC) commitment to create respectful and safe spaces where all people can come together to work in partnership.

1. PURPOSE

Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) is committed to fostering an environment in which all persons are treated with respect and dignity, and is free from discrimination, harassment, and unreasonable conduct. This policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of all parties to uphold mutually respectful collaboration, throughout CLBC processes within both interpersonal and electronic communications. This policy applies to all employees, board members, practicum students, contractors, suppliers, CLBC eligible individuals, families and support networks, advocates, and members of the public.

CLBC commits to the people we serve and their families and/or support networks through the [Commitment to You](#) document and will:

- Respect You
- Listen to You
- Learn from You
- Recognize Your Strengths
- Communicate Openly and Honestly

2. DEFINITIONS

Bullying and Harassment: Includes any inappropriate conduct or comment that the person knows or reasonably ought to have known would cause the receiver to be humiliated or intimidated, but excludes any reasonable action taken by the employer or manager relating to the management and direction of staff or the place of employment.

Collaboration: The act of working together by two or more persons to accomplish something, where the alignment of interests is central and which is characterized by reciprocity, norms, trust, and social capital.

Communication: Essential communication includes the exchange of information that is critical for completing tasks, making decisions, and keeping an organization functioning properly. Non-essential communication involves conversations and information sharing that is not critical for immediate operations or objectives.

Cultural Safety: An outcome of respectful engagement based on recognition of the power imbalances inherent to service systems, and the work to address these imbalances. A culturally safe environment for Indigenous peoples is one that is physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually safe without challenge, ignorance, or denial of an individual's identity. Practicing cultural safety requires having knowledge of the colonial, sociopolitical, and historical events that trigger disparities Indigenous Peoples encounter and that perpetuate and maintain ongoing racism and unequal treatment.

Discrimination: Means discrimination based on a person's Indigenous identity, sex, race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, residence, or criminal conviction unrelated to the person's employment.

Disrespectful Conduct: Inappropriate behaviour, including bullying or harassment directed against another person that a reasonable person knows, or ought to know, would cause offence, humiliation, or intimidation. It includes any conduct that results in injury or threat of injury including, but not limited to, acts of aggression, reputational harm, verbal or written threats, or vandalism of personal property. This includes intimidating language targeted at named CLBC employees, stating the person will share untrue and/or misleading information or an individual's private medical information via social media, with the intent to force employees into agreeing to demanded action or face public harassment.

Engagement: The relationships we build and actions we take to learn from, partner with and invest in the leadership of the people we serve, their allies, and communities, in order to work together toward shared understanding and meaningful change.

Manager: The immediate supervisor of a CLBC employee.

Power imbalance: Relationships where one person has power over, or the power to influence the wellbeing of others, including their finances, residence, employment, or reputation. CLBC recognizes power as an important component in a respectful environment.

Solution-focused: An approach to individual and collaborative activities that looks forward, with an open mind, towards the possibilities.

Trauma Informed Practice: Integrating an understanding of trauma into all levels of care, system engagement, workplace development, agency policy, and interagency work. The goal of trauma informed approaches is to develop programs, services, and environments that promote coping skills and resilience, and do not re-traumatize.

Unreasonable conduct: Any behaviour that, because of its nature or frequency, raises health, safety, resource or equity issues. It can include persistent and unreasonable demands being placed on people including staff, lack of cooperation with efforts to resolve a complaint, argumentative or threatening language, and repetitive submissions of large and often irrelevant volumes of paperwork and communications.

Workplace: Place of employment or work that may include the office, the field, or any place being travelled to and from the office, home or field, or any place the worker may come in contact with the public.

3. POLICY

Operational Context

3.1 CLBC prioritizes respectful engagement for the benefit of both the individuals, families and support networks we serve and for CLBC staff. CLBC staff commit to engage respectfully and treat people with dignity throughout any process and expect that people engaging with CLBC treat staff reasonably and respectfully.

3.2 CLBC recognizes that decisions and discussions impacting an individual's life can evoke strong emotions. Throughout all interactions, CLBC staff engage in trauma-informed practice, while upholding the principles of respectful engagement

Guiding Principles

3.3 CLBC promotes the values of being culturally safe, helpful, accountable, respectful and kind. In addition, CLBC's approach to respectful engagement also supports the following principles:

Welcoming and Safe environment

We work to create physically and culturally accessible environments in which individuals, their families and support networks feel welcomed and safe.

Mutual respect and collaboration

Working together is approached through open communication, collaboration, and engagement that is responsive, respectful, supportive and solution-focused.

Administrative Fairness

The process is transparent and applied fairly and consistently across the organization. Decisions are documented and communicated to the person (s) affected by this policy.

3.4 These principles of engagement are evident in practices including:

- Interacting at a time when conversations can be reasonable and productive,
- Giving each other as much advance notice as possible about meetings and decisions,
- Being clear about time commitments and the capacity to respond to issues,
- Connecting in person, when possible, and asking about the most comfortable modes of communication, and
- Approaching each other with clear expectations and good intentions.

Requirements

3.5 CLBC staff must adhere to the *Standards of Conduct for CLBC Employees*, as agreed to upon hiring. Concerns members of the public may have about CLBC staff conduct should be reported immediately to the appropriate CLBC manager.

3.6 All persons are accountable for their own conduct and must conduct themselves in a respectful, cooperative, and non-discriminatory manner during any processes of CLBC engagement including but not limited to:

- General inquiries, and other forms of public engagement
- Planning for Supports and Services
- Advocacy
- Complaints

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 If either party feels that an interaction or conduct becomes unreasonable as defined in this policy, they should communicate their discomfort to the other party. If the interaction does not improve, they may excuse themselves from the situation. If a reasonable interaction cannot be reestablished over time, alternative forms of communication and communication limits may be put in place.

4.2 In cases where a person becomes unreasonable in their interactions with CLBC staff such that it creates health, mental health, safety, resource, or equity issues, CLBC will take steps to address the behaviour and may limit non-essential communications for a period of time, if necessary.

If communications are limited due to unreasonable conduct, advance notice is provided in writing to notify the individual (s) that CLBC may establish restrictions. CLBC will provide advance notice when behavior may lead to restrictions, in line with principles of administrative fairness. This will be done through a letter explaining:

- a description of the unreasonable behavior, and why it is problematic for specific reasons,
- an offer for the person to correct their behavior,
- the restrictions that may be put into place if the behaviour does not change,
- the time frame for review, and
- a copy of this policy.

4.3 Where unreasonable conduct, up to and including illegal conduct, continues by a member of the public and jeopardizes effective communication and/or hinders the ability to move through a CLBC process, restrictions may be put into place until conduct returns to the guidelines established in this policy. Restrictions may include one or more of the following:

- Who a person may contact within CLBC
- What subject matter CLBC staff will respond to
- When a person can make contact with CLBC staff

- Where a person can interact with CLBC's staff face-to-face, particularly if a person has demonstrated highly aggressive or confrontational behaviour
- How a person can contact CLBC staff - for example, in writing or by telephone only
- Suspending engagement if there is conduct investigated by police

4.4 To ensure that a fair process is followed in reaching the decision to restrict non-essential communication, the person who is affected by a restriction will be told of the decision in writing and informed of:

- the reason(s) why their behaviour is unacceptable,
- the details of any earlier warnings issued by CLBC about their conduct,
- clear details about the restriction and how long the restriction is in place for,
- how the person can request a review of the restriction, and
- what is required of them to have the restriction lifted.

4.5 Discrimination, bullying and harassment are not acceptable and will not be tolerated by CLBC. CLBC has the right to investigate an incident or complaint, with or without the person's consent, where there are concerns about alleged disrespectful conduct or discrimination and the impact of such conduct on maintaining a respectful workplace, in accordance with *Workers Compensation Act* and *Occupational Health Safety regulation*.

4.6 Public discourse and fair comment are expected and welcomed by CLBC. Where actions such as a social media posts, letter writing campaigns and media outreach contain misleading information and/or inappropriately target specific employees, CLBC reserves the right to assess legal options to ensure the safety of our staff.

4.7 Where there are concerns with CLBC staff conduct by a member of the public, a complaint may be filed as per the *Complaints Resolution Policy*.

4.8 CLBC staff experiencing unreasonable conduct may refer to the *Respectful Workplace Behaviour Policy*.

4.9 Where conduct continues to breach the principles and requirements of this policy and after all steps are followed as outlined above, the matter may be deferred to the appropriate legal authority.

5. REFERENCES

[Complaints Resolution Policy](#)

[Cultural Safety Policy](#)

Respectful Workplace Behaviour Policy

Prevention of Workplace Violence Policy

Standards of Conduct for CLBC Employees