



## **POLICY 3.1: NON-DISCRIMINATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

These policies and procedures are meant to guide employees of the Louisiana Center for Children's Rights (LCCR) in their activities on behalf of the organization. They do not establish any contract or other legal rights on behalf of LCCR employees.

"Must," in this Policy Statement, indicates an obligation. "Should" indicates an expectation. Appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination may follow on the violation of any policy articulated in this Statement.

For the purposes of this Policy Statement, "LCCR employees," "employees" and "LCCR representatives" refers to any person working on behalf of LCCR, including but not limited to supervisors, staff attorneys, investigators, social workers, youth advocates, administrative staff, law clerks, interns and volunteers.

### **I. COMMITMENT, LOYALTY, AND SERVICE TO EVERY CLIENT**

- A. **We fight for every client.** LCCR's core values require that employees represent every client with integrity, loyalty, commitment, compassion, and courage. The sum of these values is the zeal that public defenders owe to all of their clients. The obligation to represent every client zealously means, among other things, that:
  1. **We do not judge our clients.** Employees must advocate zealously for the expressed interests and goals of every client. Subject to the requirements of legal ethics, that obligation is not affected by an employee's belief that a client may have committed the delinquent act of which he or she is accused, or by an employee's belief that a client would benefit from the supervision of the court or from services available through the juvenile justice system.
  2. **We do not discriminate against our clients.** Employees must never, through words or actions, discriminate in providing services to any client for any reason whatsoever, including but not limited to beliefs about the client's race, color, creed, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, national origin,

age, disability, veteran's or military status, justice system history, or any other protected classification under applicable federal, state or local law.

3. **We protect and welcome every client.** In keeping with LCCR's commitment to holistic advocacy, LCCR's employees must protect and advocate for the safety, dignity, and physical and emotional well-being of all clients in accordance with clients' expressed interests and goals. This means, among other things, that all LCCR employees share in the responsibility to create an affirming and welcoming space for all LCCR clients, including but not limited to clients who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ).

B. **All LCCR employees have a duty of loyalty to all LCCR clients.** No breach of loyalty, breach of confidence, or public disparaging statements about clients will be tolerated.

## II. RELATIONSHIPS WITH CLIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

A. **We respect every client.** LCCR employees must be cognizant and respectful of, and respond appropriately to, the diversity of LCCR's clients. Employees must make every effort to communicate appropriately with every client and to serve every client faithfully. Supervisors must ensure that all employees are properly trained and equipped to represent all of LCCR's clients zealously, thoughtfully, and with sensitivity. Supervisors must also ensure that, to the extent LCCR uses any standardized interview or intake forms, those forms are sensitive to, and affirming of, diversity among LCCR clients. In particular, the forms must not convey any assumptions about the sexual orientation or gender identity of LCCR clients.

B. **We do not betray client confidences.** LCCR employees who work directly with clients should meet with client family members as appropriate, making reasonable efforts to forge constructive relationships with client family members. LCCR employees must remember that there is no exception to confidentiality and the attorney-client privilege for family members. Family members of LCCR's clients are not themselves clients of LCCR. Employees must not share confidential or privileged information with family members of a client absent the consent of that client. Employees must, for instance, protect the privacy of LGBTQ clients by obtaining the explicit permission of those clients before discussing any issues connected to the sexual orientation or gender identity/expression of those clients with client families.

## III. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

A. It has been, and will continue to be, the policy of LCCR to be an Equal Opportunity Employer.

B. LCCR's policy, practice, and objective is to recruit, hire, train and promote into all job levels the most qualified applicants, and to execute all personnel actions and decisions without regard to race, color, creed, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, veteran's or military status, justice system history, or any other protected classification under applicable federal, state or local law. In furtherance of this objective and in compliance with La. R.S. 15:141, *et seq.*, LCCR actively seeks to recruit candidates who are women, racial/ethnic minorities, disabled, LGBTQ, and/or otherwise historically or currently underrepresented in law offices and in the practice of law.

- C. LCCR's Board, management and staff must and do make all employment decisions using objective standards based on an individual's qualifications as they relate to a particular job vacancy or staff position, and in furtherance of equal employment opportunity.

**IV. DISCRIMINATION, HARRASSMENT, AND RETALIATION:**

- A. LCCR is committed to providing its applicants and employees with a professional work environment that is free of discrimination, harassment and retaliation. LCCR will not tolerate discrimination, harassment or retaliation by any individual, including any manager, supervisor, coworker, vendor, contractor or other visitor of LCCR, directed at any applicant, employee, vendor, contractor or other visitor of LCCR.
- B. Discrimination against any individual in any aspect of his or her employment because of his or her race, color, creed, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, veteran's or military status, justice system history, or any other protected classification under applicable federal, state or local law is against LCCR policy and will not be tolerated.