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Working Centre Philosophy on Hospitality and Equality

As an organization we are committed to the following philosophy of practise and hospitality:

- All individuals deserve respect, openness and hospitality. Everyone is welcome in our spaces – our role is to host this understanding as a foundation for welcoming people into the space – and as an invitation to each person to share in the complex responses required if all are to feel welcome.
- Never saying no – As an organization we commit to the idea of never saying no to a person's request or situation. This invites us to think creatively together to find a different response. Are there resources and ideas that have not been uncovered or considered? Can we think creatively about the situation before us in ways that bring about a creative response that remains open to possibility?
- Personal responsibility – There is no one group or individual responsible for the health and safety of others. Each person is invited to think creatively about the thoughtfulness and practises that make our workplace safe, that invite others to feel part of the space, and that builds a spirit of shared responsibility. This personal responsibility includes a thoughtful reflection about safety that is rooted in the philosophy of the organization. Are there issues or concerns that should be raised thoughtfully in discussion together? Are there physical safety issues that we should explore together?
- The Working Centre community – When we work with an individual, we form a unique personal connection that is based on relationship and exchange. At the same time, we are representing the wider body of possibilities within The Working Centre as a whole. It is both the personal connection one offers and about the wider community of supports offered by the organization. All our responses to an individual must be embedded in this broader context, and should think creatively about how to respond individually within this wider collaborative approach.
- A basic assumption of this philosophy is that one does not enter high risk situations alone – we have a practise of shared responsibility and shared response. One person should not knowingly enter a high risk situation without the framing of this wider support. We work to ensure that each person is aware of these practises.
- Organizational Virtues – All that we examine as an organization commits to the following virtues; we examine each situation, direction, and activity within this lens:
 - Serving others
 - Rejecting status
 - Work as Gift
 - Creating community tools
 - Living simply
 - Building community

Practices

- 1. Orientation and Training:** The Working Centre engages in a process of deliberate and thoughtful immersion for new staff into the philosophy and standard of practice of the organization. Job shadowing, mentorship, observation and the exploration of applied philosophy are an important foundation for the orientation of people who are new to The Working Centre.
- 2. Regular Team Meetings:** Within the hubs of Working Centre activities, meetings happen regularly. These meetings offer staff a chance to explore strategies and concerns that relate to best serving the needs of people we meet, understanding our own approaches and responsibilities, problem solving together when difficult situations arise. These issues should include harassment, fear or threat of violence, dangerous working situations, etc. In our distributive form of management and leadership, it is our hope that these issues are resolved on a project by project basis, as circumstances often differ greatly between each project. Workers are encouraged to talk about unsafe work issues so that the hub can resolve these issues together.
- 3. Health and Safety Committee:** The purpose of our Health and Safety Committee is to reflect more deeply on issues that impact the entire organization, or that cannot be resolved on a project basis. This group seeks to thoughtfully engage the philosophies outlined above, not to act as safety police. The goal is to think thoughtfully about the level of risk we take on – when our goal is to serve people others might leave behind, how do we thoughtfully invite people into our spaces with true hospitality? By reinforcing our core philosophies, this group helps us to talk more widely about the practices and deep respect that keep us safe in our work. This group is available to discuss practices that may not feel heard in the hub groups.
- 4. Health and Safety:** We see the health and safety of others as a trust. Wherever possible, we secure the certifications and training to help with issues like Safe Food Handling, First Aid, etc. As each situation arises, we learn new ways to be alert to the possible ways that our spaces and practices can build a safer environment for all, within the context of the individual within the whole, always balancing these often conflicting issues.
- 5. Workplace Harassment and Violence:** We have a commitment as an organization to respect one another in our work – between employees, with the people we serve, and with our wide core of volunteers. Trust forms the basis of much of our work. We must strive together to ensure that this trust is not broken, and we work towards reconciliation and understanding in each place where this trust is broken. The holding of this trust is an area of primary focus for our organization, and we invite each person – staff, volunteer, patron – to participate together in this spirit.
- 6. Reflection Together:** At times when the above practices and philosophies are not sufficient to respond to the situation at hand, we reflect together at all levels of the organization. What have we missed in our open welcome of others? How have we missed the thoughtful engagement of personal responsibility? Are there ways we should be more thoughtful in supporting one another? Do we need to change our practices to adapt to the situation at hand?
- 7. Volunteers:** TWC has structured the integration of volunteer roles into the daily work of its many projects. We function together in complex environments where there is shared responsibility. Each project coordinator has the responsibility to welcome and assist new volunteers. It is important that new volunteers have someone to teach them the role and help them become part of the workforce that makes each project possible. The work of each project takes place during open, regular hours. All of the work takes place in open

spaces. Staff, volunteers, and the people who use the services are always visible and each can see where the other is. The Working Centre “seeks to build a society where it is easier to be good.” We foster open, inclusive workplaces where staff, volunteers and participants are encouraged to follow the good. It is the responsibility of the project coordinator to model a workplace of dialogue, transparency, of shared responsibility, of openness to concerns, and with the ability and responsibility to listen and learn about presenting issues. Larger issues need to be discussed in a wider way so that each individual is aware of the situation. This model of openness and the common good has served The Working Centre well over 30 years.

8. **Complaints:** From time to time issues come to a head and a complaint is made about someone's behaviour, about a practise that seems discriminating, or perhaps about a safety concern. All complaints are to be taken seriously by project Coordinators and it is important that we respond in an appropriate way. There are many ways to respond to a complaint. If the complaint directly stems from an experience of a participant then the complaint can be resolved directly through listening, and discussion. Sometimes the complaint brings up a broader issue that needs more people to understand the problem. In this case, sometimes a meeting is organized with volunteers, sometimes with staff, sometimes at a larger coordinators level to discuss the implications of the complaint. It is the approach of The Working Centre to listen to each complaint and to develop an appropriate response that entails dialogue and understanding.

As an organization committed to listening and inclusion, we explore the complexity of true hospitality in all its complexity. This is an ongoing conversation of respect within our commitment to service to others.

On behalf of The Working Centre

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Mancini". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joe Mancini
Director