



VMC Foundation Policy on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Respect

A policy inclusive of the VMC Foundation's entire board and staff is one of diversity, equity, inclusion, and respect. The word 'respect' is key, as its arrows point in all directions and between individuals and groups equally. Respect is beyond 'tolerance', which is perhaps a minimum threshold for coexistence. Respect allows for differences, dialogue, and humility. The older adage "celebrate diversity" can seem unattainable. Respect is an enhanced kindness and courtesy, and perhaps a pathway toward celebration.

Benefits of a Policy on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Respect

The work of the VMC Foundation directly supports an incredibly diverse patient population in Santa Clara County. A Policy on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Respect can benefit the VMC Foundation in a variety of ways, including:

- Culturally-celebrating and anti-racist staff members are more successful at working with and building trust within multicultural communities.
- Increasing respect among the board, organizational leadership, staff, and volunteers can help diverse employees and clients feel more comfortable and secure in the workplace. also It can lead to a sense of belonging which then leads to ownership and a stake in the organization.
- Nonprofits with inclusive and respectful practices are often more successful at attracting and retaining high-quality talent.
- Nonprofit organizations work more successfully with partner organizations when they have strengths internally in diversity, equity, inclusion and respect.
- Ultimately, greater attention to inclusion/equity/respect will result in our organization being more effective in our work because we will benefit from and utilize a wide range of talent, input, and engagement in achieving our mission.

Shared Understanding

The board and staff of the VMC Foundation shall practice equity, inclusion and respect, which starts with a common understanding of the following:

- Acknowledging that we interpret events through the lens of a particular culture — the norms for thinking, feeling, and behaving that are shared by a specific group of people.
- Remembering that people from another race, gender, culture et al, may have completely different interpretations of a given situation.

- Recognizing the natural tendency to see our culturally-based interpretations as “right” even though they represent only one set of options among many.
- Valuing the act of seeking out alternative interpretations as we interact with people, make decisions, and solve problems.
- Designing, at the organizational level, structures and settings to meet the needs of diverse stakeholders.
- Acknowledging and amplifying the wealth that different cultures and perspectives bring to the table.

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Respect

The VMC Foundation puts this policy into practice in the following ways:

- **Explicit respect for diversity and equity.** The organization's published policies state clear consequences for discriminatory behaviors. Written procedures describe inclusive practices. The Code of Ethics affirms respect for cultures represented in stakeholder communities.
- **Intentional hiring practices.** Job descriptions mention commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and respect as a desired skill. The organization’s leaders and hiring managers receive on-going training on methods to increase awareness of, and challenge biases, integrate diversity into the style and the structure of the interview process, and develop structured and inclusive interview questions. A standard statement of inclusion is incorporated into every job posting:

At the Valley Medical Center Foundation, we value diversity in experiences, cultures and perspectives. This diversity is vital to advancing innovation, critical thinking, solving complex problems, and creating an inclusive community. Because we seek a workforce with a wide range of perspectives and experiences, we encourage diverse candidates to apply, including people of color (in particular, under-represented minorities), women, veterans, members of LGBTQIA communities and individuals with differing abilities. We welcome applicants who will help us advance our commitment to an inclusive workplace and who desire to join a staff that is engaged in addressing issues of diversity, equity, inclusion and respect.

- **Fostering equity, inclusion and respect among staff members.** The organization will review and potentially update this policy each year, outlining ongoing staff training to establish and grow skills and competencies in cultural inclusion, especially as relevant to our daily work.
- **Visible evidence of inclusion.** Community stakeholders will find themselves reflected in positive images and stories throughout the organization’s range of PR and marketing materials. Supplies purchased for health programs (ex. Reach Out and Read books) will be offered in the most common native languages among program participants. Offices and meeting areas display artwork, posters, and signs with positive images of stakeholder cultures.

- **Pathway to inclusive leadership.** The organization’s top levels of leadership actively embrace the variety of viewpoints that members of different races and cultures bring to the table. The board will review and adopt guidelines for the nomination of new members in order to ensure diversification of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences.

Finally, this policy is just clever (or clumsy) wordsmithing. It is only useful if it contributes to the board and staff behaving in ways that are inclusive, equitable and respectful. It is helpful only if it positions the VMC Foundation as an agency that actively fights racism, sexism, homophobia, and all ways in which we divide ourselves as members of a larger community that cares for and respects one another in pursuit of a common mission. May the changes be felt internally and seen externally. May they be ongoing, thoughtful and kind.



A brief history of this policy, as recounted by current agency Executive Director Chris Wilder

The VMC Foundation’s first policy of this kind, then called the Cultural Humility Policy, was approved by the board May 23, 2018. At the time, the term “cultural humility” was adopted as a clarifying replacement of a commonly used term “cultural competency”. The VMC Foundation believed then, and now, that a greater understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion is a journey rather than a destination. Efforts to better understand issues around race, racism, gender, identity, white privilege and power dynamics cannot realistically end at a place where one has become “competent”; it is a life-long process best undertaken when one admits imperfection, bias, and ignorance—and remains humble and ready to learn, discover and change.

By June of 2020, amid a deep national discussion on race equity and systemic oppression following the murder of George Floyd, several VMC Foundation board members and staff sought to re-frame its Cultural Humility Policy. The thought was that the term “cultural humility” – while preferred over “cultural competence”, had a problem: It centered *whiteness*. That is, it is generally regarded by progressive thinkers that white people in America lack and need more humility. White people (the narrative goes) should feel accountable and responsible for change, after hundreds of years of deliberate systemic inequality—from slavery to Jim Crow to redlining to internment camps to kids in cages near the Mexican border...and on and on.

And while this may be an accurate perspective, it is also limited in scope and places white people at the focus of the ensuing policy. Brown and black people have no place in a policy of “cultural humility” designed (once again) by and for white people. It misses too much. Oppression and disrespect cross ethnicities and races. It passively excludes LGBTQAI (the evolving abbreviation) communities, people of varying ability levels, and cultural differences within a race, ethnicity, class, etc. Thus, in the Summer of 2020 the policy was revised to this version, approved 9/23/2020.