



## DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION: FAQs

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REVISED – EFFECTIVE:	N/A

**Question 1:** How does CASLPO support registrants to enable them to act appropriately to address socio-cultural factors that need to be taken into consideration when providing health care services?

**Answer 1:** CASLPO provides support to registrants through various College resources, including the [Code of Ethics](#) (“Code”), the [Guide for Service Delivery Across Diverse Cultures](#) (“Guide”) and through the College’s [Practice Advice](#) service. In addition, the College’s [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion \(DEI\) web page](#) provides further information, including access to externally-published resources, news releases and articles that registrants may find useful in adapting their practice to meet the needs of all patients.

Every patient is unique. Each registrant is expected to adapt their intervention to meet the needs of their patient by listening, continuing with their own education opportunities, self-awareness, and reflection upon any personal biases. Registrants are expected to contact colleagues and/or seek Practice Advice, when uncertain about how to proceed.

It should be noted that the College has undertaken to review and update the Code and Guide, to provide updated assistance and guidance to registrants. Webinars, including further guidance, will enable registrants to adjust their practice to meet the diverse need of their patient populations.

**Question 2:** Who would an audiologist or speech-language pathologist ask when clarification is needed about the social and cultural norms of a patient?

**Answer 2:** It is best to ask a person or organization that is well-informed. Start with your patient. You may also wish to speak with the patient’s family member, professional colleagues, and/or community organizations. There is no one set answer. Each patient is a distinct individual and therefore, strategies which may have worked well with other patients, may not be appropriate for the current patient.

Patients may also wish to share with you any errors or misconceptions around social or cultural norms which they have experienced, either through your care or others. You should endeavour to be responsive to the cultural perspectives that each individual brings to the clinical relationship. Listen to your patient, acknowledge the information they are sharing and any error you may have made. Express empathy and ensure that you take the appropriate steps needed to avoid making similar mistakes in the future. Respect in your approach is key to fostering a healthy patient-practitioner relationship.

Undertake your own research around social and cultural norms relevant to the patient, such as a possible history of indigenous abuse, racialization and bias in health care. It is important to be cognizant of the fact that everyone is not treated equally or equitably in the health care system. Therefore, your intervention may need to be adjusted to ensure that prior individual or systemic discrimination is not carried forward. For instance, consider whether the College's Quality Assurance self-assessment tool, and therapy materials you are using, are most appropriate materials to reference given the background characteristics of your patient.

**Question 3: I am a registrant of the College who has had the unfortunate experience of racist and discriminatory remarks being directed towards me by co-workers. I have brought these instances to the attention of my employer. However, nothing has been done. What can I do?**

**Answer 3:** No one should be subjected to racist or discriminatory remarks, either as a patient, or as a practitioner. It is important to remember, employers have an obligation to ensure that they provide their employees with an environment free from harassment or abuse. "Workplace harassment" means engaging in a course of vexatious comments or a pattern of continued conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known, or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome (please refer to Ontario's [Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1990 \(OHS\)](#)). For more information about individual employee rights under *OHS*, please contact a lawyer well versed in employment law and/or human rights law.

Registrants may also choose to speak with their employer about workplace policies and training that can be provided to employees to address these occurrences. Posting policies respecting zero-tolerance of harassment and discrimination in patient waiting rooms, and on websites, may also be a helpful way for employers to set expectations correctly with employees and patients around harassment that will not be tolerated in a clinical setting. The [Canadian Center for Diversity and Inclusion](#) and the [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#) are organizations which provide valuable resources for individuals and employers in this regard. The [Human Rights Legal Support Centre](#) offers legal services to individuals who may have experienced discrimination.

**Question 4: I have a young adult patient that has a head injury who is making discriminatory remarks. What should I do?**

**Answer:** Use your clinical judgement on how to best manage this situation. Consider what behaviour is attributable to the head injury, and how you would address it with the patient. If you are working with other professionals, reach out to them to determine if the patient is using discriminatory language and decide on a consistent approach to address it.

The [Practice Standards and Guidelines on Acquired Cognitive Communication Disorders](#) discusses inappropriate social behaviour:

PATIENT AND MEMBER SAFETY Occasionally, patients may display aggressive, self-injurious behavior, agitation, poor impulse control and/or inappropriate social behaviour. Consequently, patient safety, as well as member safety, is an important consideration. Members should ensure they have strategies and resources to manage the behaviours, when needed. Resources, such as the *Workplace Violence and Harassment: Understanding the Law* (2010) Guide from the Ministry of Labour provides definitions of violence and threatening behaviours and outlines the member's responsibilities and rights under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (1990).

Consider incorporating strategies to address and modify the patient's inappropriate behaviours and use of language in your treatment plan. Strategies should be patient-centered. If needed, reach out to colleagues who work in acquired cognitive communication disorders for additional methods to help in this area.

Again, posting policies respecting zero-tolerance of harassment and discrimination in patient waiting rooms, and on websites, may also be a helpful way for employers to set expectations correctly with employees and patients around harassment that will not be tolerated in a clinical setting.

Question 5: Can CASLPO set up a repository of anti-racist and culturally diverse resource materials on its website? Will there be guidance provided on working with specific patient populations?

Answer 5: In the summer of 2020, CASLPO launched a [DEI web page](#), which contains the College's statement on anti-racism and the provision of ethical care, respecting its zero-tolerance towards discrimination. This page also includes links to resources which registrants may use to inform their practice.

While there have been requests for specific guidelines to assist with service delivery for specific communities or groups, there is no shortcut to adjusting intervention. Guidance that is targeted at specific groups may run the risk of over-generalization and may ultimately gloss over the need to treat each patient as unique.

While there are a variety of strategies that can be used, there is no quick answer for every patient. Fitting patients into one category or another, could ultimately cause harm to the patient and damage the treatment relationship. As discussed above, to address the needs for patients, it is important to listen to your patient, conduct research if you can, actively engage in learning about diverse communities and cultures, speak with subject matter experts, and build appropriate treatment plans to benefit your patient.