

MountainStar Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement



Our Statement:

MountainStar believes that all children have the right to equitable opportunities that help them achieve their full potential. We are committed to recognizing the history and diverse needs of our community and providing equitable resources to support parents' efforts in creating a safe and nurturing environment to raise their children free from abuse and neglect. For our clients, staff, and communities, we strive to build a sense of belonging, compassion, and empathy for each other as unique individuals.

MountainStar operates in a community where in 1855, in the first of several treaties, the United States forcibly took 10 million acres of land from the first peoples of Middle Oregon. We recognize and acknowledge the indigenous land of Middle Oregon tribes. These peoples have lived and worked on this land from time immemorial and continue to do so. It is on their traditional land where we now work to prevent child abuse and neglect by supporting and strengthening families.

Acknowledgment is a simple, powerful way of showing respect and taking a step toward correcting the stories and practices that erase Indigenous people's history and culture and toward inviting and honoring the truth.

MountainStar also recognizes Oregon's deep history of racial exclusion and ethnic discrimination and that there continues to be a pattern of unequal opportunities and outcomes for young children and their families due to their race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and other characteristics. Racism and other forms of oppression are correlated with negative life-long outcomes such as increased health risks, increased behavioral risks, and increased socio-economic challenges. MountainStar leadership and staff recognize the need to offset the effects of oppression and discrimination through individual and systemic work, building resilience within children, families, and communities, and reducing further exposure to adverse events.

While we know that we will not always get it right, we are committed to the sustained effort it will take to realize this vision for MountainStar children and families. We will continue to grow, negotiate, and navigate as an early childhood organization, community leaders, and individuals through the following pledges:

Pledges:

To the Children and Families MountainStar Serves

- Create an inclusive organization where families feel welcomed, understood, and supported
- Make our programs accessible to children and families who are farther from opportunity by focusing on equity instead of equality
- Provide equitable learning opportunities and support to children in our programs as they process their life experiences and understand their emotions, including by partnering with and implementing ideas from other experts such as Early Intervention-Early Childhood Special Education staff, therapists, etc.
- Provide an opportunity for MountainStar parents to give direct feedback on program impact and have a voice at the board level in enhancing services to best meet their needs
- Align our policies, practices, and resources so that people of all races, cultures, socioeconomic statuses, gender identities, and sexual orientations have genuine opportunities to thrive

To Our Community

- Continue to highlight MountainStar families' biggest challenges and barriers in a way that promotes awareness and invites the community to act
- Provide a variety of community engagement opportunities that invite simultaneous participation from community members at different socio-economic levels
- Seek out community partners, donors, and volunteers that reflect the diversity of our community, and engage with these diverse partners in an inclusive, respectful, and authentic way
- Ensure that community partners, donors, and volunteers understand the gravity of our work and how their commitment creates equitable opportunities for families with the greatest needs
- Partner with foundations, businesses, and other funders that share MountainStar's values and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Advocate at the state and local level to increase awareness for equity-based services for our community's children and vulnerable families
- Use our voice as community leaders when we see children and families experiencing adversity in our community, state, and country

To Our Staff and Organization

- Create an environment in which everyone feels equally valued through respectful communication and active listening that builds trust and creates an opportunity to share ideas
- Ensure staff are provided the space for self-care and encourage a healthy work/life balance
- Celebrate diversity in all forms within our board and staff – work and life experience, beliefs, culture, class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, etc.
- Continue personal growth and education, recognizing our individual responsibility to create an inclusive work environment and provide equitable services to MountainStar families
- Review and refine annually the organizational policies and practices and their impacts on our diverse staff members, families, and communities

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Definitions:

Diversity: The representation of different and unique identities, characteristics, experiences, and perspectives.

Equity: Giving everyone what they need to succeed by increasing access, resources, and opportunities for all, especially for those who are underrepresented and have been historically disadvantaged.

Inclusion: A welcoming culture in which differences are celebrated and everyone is valued, respected, and able to reach their full potential.