



# **An Anti-Oppression Framework for Child Welfare in Ontario**

**Produced by the Ontario Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable  
Written by Helen Wong and June Ying Yee**

**August 2010**

“(Anti-Oppression means) giving up power, being inclusive of all groups, of all marginalized groups, having representation from these groups and having joint decision-making about policy, procedures and practices.”

*- Consultation Participant, 2009*

### **Acknowledgements**

The Ontario Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable (AOR) provides a forum to develop, support and share initiatives in anti-oppression work. It aims to develop and recommend strategies to build agency

capacity and advocate for the inclusion of anti-oppression principles in policies, structures, practices and both internal and external relationships.

We are grateful to the many people who have contributed to and supported the development of this report which, for the first time, presents a framework to support and guide anti-oppression work in child welfare.

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**“The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people.”**

~ Martin Luther King, Jr., [Civil-Rights Leader. 1929-1968](#)

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## **A. Introduction**

### **Background**

In October, 2008, the Ontario Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable (AOR) released a Discussion Paper titled “Anti-Oppression in Child Welfare: Laying the Foundation for Change.” The purpose of that document was twofold. First, the paper set out the key areas in which Children’s Aid Societies could focus on within their organizations to build capacity and develop strategies that would support anti-oppression in child welfare. Second, a series of discussion questions were presented in order to “stimulate a provincial dialogue and consultation process that [would] result in the creation of a shared framework for anti-oppression in all Ontario child welfare agencies.” (AOR, 2008, p. 6)

In May, 2009, the Provincial Project Management Committee, supported by the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies and the Local Director’s Section, provided project monies to the AOR to carry out a consultation process that would lead to the development of a framework for anti-oppression in child welfare. This document presents that framework, informed by the findings of the consultation process and the pioneering work done by those who have gone before us.

The role of the Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable (AOR) is to provide a forum for members to develop, support and share initiatives on anti-oppression work. More than 25 agencies are currently represented. The focus of the AOR has been to develop and recommend strategies that build agency capacity and provide advocacy opportunities for the inclusion of anti-oppression principles in an agency’s policies, structures, and practices. (See Appendix D for the AOR Terms of Reference.)

By having agencies’ policies, structures and practices informed by anti-oppression principles, child welfare service delivery can be transformed to centre on the needs and circumstances of those who are marginalized and excluded from equitable participation in society. Such a focus would enable a true commitment to the ongoing and sustainable welfare of children.

### **Why an Anti-Oppression Perspective is Critical to Child Welfare**

Anti-oppression can be defined as the lens through which one understands how “race, gender, sexual orientation and identity, ability, age, class, occupation and social service usage,” (AOR, p. 2) can result in systemic inequalities for particular groups.

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The child welfare system has been criticized for imposing dominant values on marginalized communities, while at the same time failing to take into account the reality of the deleterious effects of inequality on families and children. The net result is that the child welfare system has the potential to reinforce, if not deepen, the inequalities already experienced by many parents and children.

The field is challenged to respond to the structural inequalities that families are experiencing while also finding ways not to replicate a history that has imposed the dominant discourse of blaming poor and marginalized parents for the lack of resources and supports that the state itself has, also, had difficulty providing and sustaining.

Much literature (Strega, 2009; Dumbrill, 2003; Dominelli, et. al., 2005) challenges the field to scrutinize the demographic reality of who is involved in the child welfare system. Current child welfare statistics reveal a disproportionately high number of children in care from poor, black, Indigenous, and single parent-led families, to name a few (Jones, 1994; Campbell, 1991; Maracle, 2002). In addition, research (Dumbrill, 2003) on child welfare adult service users' experience documents how workers use 'power over' in their daily practice simply by following seemingly benign, neutral and fair agency policies and provincial standards that, in application, are oppressive. Such actions are in contrast to a 'power with' approach (Dumbrill, 2003), which focuses on building the capacities and strengths of families within the constraints of limited resources offered by the state.

There is often a contradiction between the positive intent of child welfare policy versus the negative impact of its implementation. Therefore, until we put the child welfare system itself under scrutiny there can be no change in the current negative outcomes that disproportionately impact certain already marginalized groups. Certainly, there will always be barriers and limitations with respect to how much the child welfare system alone can do to eradicate systemic inequalities. That, however, is no reason not to take the first step by making the effort in a coordinated and strategic way to build the capacity, incentive, and support of what promising anti-oppressive practices are already occurring in the child welfare field. From that, there are ample opportunities for partnerships with other organizations and finding those people, working within them, who are committed to equity, inclusion and anti-oppression.

In the absence of an anti-oppression analysis, current diversity and cultural competency initiatives will likely never be able to address the deep-rooted systemic nature of oppressive practices within the child welfare system. Much of the research and activity to date in the area of diversity have primarily focused on looking at the problem theoretically, holding 'one-off' diversity training sessions or multicultural celebrations. Rarely are these initiatives part of a broader strategy that involves everyone from management to front-line workers in a coordinated strategy with measurable anti-oppressive outcomes. Furthermore, many of these initiatives tend to be implemented independent of the existing institutional processes and mechanisms which actually produce the oppressive forces within the system (Shahsiah & Yee, 2006). Again, this is not about intent, but rather about the impact of systemic inequalities that, without critical analysis, get replicated within agency structures, policies, and practices (Lopes, 2006).

How many times have various directors, managers, and staff attended training and said yes, indeed, their awareness level has been affected? Yet most return to their jobs feeling unable and ill-equipped to make the wide-scale changes that require integrative, multi-level organizational work. The questions not answered are: ‘Who is responsible?’ and ‘How can one begin and be supported in the work that needs to occur for change in a mandated system such as child welfare?’

What is needed is an approach that reaches deep into the core of the organizational culture and involves all stakeholders working together to critically examine the unintended consequences of their own institutional processes, structures and policies. It is through this more comprehensive approach that meaningful outcomes and strategies to implement real organizational change can be developed.

### **What an Anti-Oppression (AO) Approach to Child Welfare Looks Like**

*“What determines oppression is when a person is blocked from opportunities to selfdevelopment, is excluded from the full participation in society, does not have certain rights that the dominant group takes for granted, or is assigned a second-class citizenship, not because of individual talent, merit, or failure, but because of his or her membership in a particular group or category of people” (Mullaly, 2010, p. 40).*

To begin, it may be important to distinguish AO from other approaches. Some have likened anti-oppression practice to working from a strengths-based approach. Still others may see antioppression as being about culturally sensitive or culturally competent practice. Although these approaches may have facets similar to AO practice, there are unique critical components and processes in doing anti-oppression work that are distinct and different from the above examples.

Firstly, and most critically, what distinguishes AO from other approaches is an analysis of *Power*. Such analysis recognizes that in all relationships there exist *power imbalances* based on *age, abilities, class, ethnicity, employment status, gender, geographic location, race, religion, sexual orientation* etc. (CAS Brant Supervision Manual, 2008), and that all power imbalances are *socially constructed*.

Secondly, an AO approach means being continuously conscious of how to accurately identify what is and what is not oppression; as well as knowing how to identify the processes by which power imbalances occur simultaneously at an individual, organizational and systemic level, resulting in the exclusion of social groups.

The next step is *addressing* those inequalities at the individual level (‘What can I do differently to address the power differentials occurring individually, organizationally and systemically?’).



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Finally, it is critical to *evaluate* on an ongoing basis whether or not such actions do, in fact, have a positive impact in rebalancing power and reducing systemic inequalities within the community, the organizational culture and with service users.

In order to address power imbalances, one must understand the historical and structural significance of how power and dominance is obtained and maintained within our systems (institutions). Key to this is continuous critical reflection about our own social location and how we can choose consciously or unconsciously to maintain power differentials or, alternatively, to arbitrarily act in ways that share or not share power in our roles and actions within the organization.

Social location can be defined as the groups that people belong to because of their place or position in society and history. All people have a social location that is defined by their gender, race, social class, age, ability, religion, sexual orientation, geographic location, etc. (University of Victoria, 2008) Those who are able-bodied, heterosexual male, and white, for example, can take for granted that institutional and societal values are structured according to their beliefs, perspectives, and way of doing things. This is how the dominant group maintains privilege over marginalized groups (e.g. disabled persons, gays and lesbians, women, non-white etc.) who have been historically and systemically blocked from gaining access to power to shape the norms and values of both society and institutions.

For instance, able-bodied people do not have to think about factors that a physically disabled person may encounter when participating at a meeting. Able-bodied people do not have to consider whether the meeting place is wheelchair accessible; whether they need to arrange transportation; whether specific accommodation will be provided for them; or whether their request will be arranged. Able-bodied people can expect that society is structured according to their social location. Therefore, being able-bodied is a privileged social location within society. In addition, the intersectionalities of social locations can result in multiple systemic barriers. For example, a low income person of colour with disabilities, and who is underemployed may face racism, ableism and discrimination. As a consequence, that person's social location will result in higher rates of unemployment and poverty in their daily life experiences.

*Anti-oppression deals with systems, not just (the) individual*

*-Consultation Participant, 2009*

Values shared within organizational cultures tend to reflect the dominant culture (white, male, heterosexual, Christian, able-bodied) (Yee, Wong & Janczur, 2006). Because these dominant values and perspectives are supported by institutions and systems, they become accepted as the social norm or status quo and often remain unchallenged, and rationalized as the way things are done (Yee, 2008). Once they become entrenched in our systems, they become very difficult to change (Mullaly, 2010). Institutional oppression occurs when those from the dominant groups take for granted that their values are organizationally supported, thereby, giving them tangible power and acquisition of resources to shape and define how decisions and policies are made and, indirectly, determine who should benefit from them (Yee, 2008).

An AO approach consciously challenges and questions the status quo or the norms of the organization to find the systemic inequalities. By doing so, alternative strategies that recognize differences in peoples' ability to participate and access resources, supports and systems can result in organizations finding multiple ways of doing things to accommodate these differences and, in turn, create more inclusive participation.

AO work also involves those who have privilege becoming allies of those who do not, by sharing power and creating authentic collaboration. In essence, AO work seeks to identify strategies to construct power in a way that will address the systemic inequalities that are operating simultaneously at the individual, group and institutional level, as opposed to producing and reproducing oppression (Yee, Wong, and Janczur, 2006). The key to being anti-oppressive is to act based on a commitment to social equality and social justice (The Children's Aid Society of Brant, 2009) as well as to demonstrate accountability by integrating individual and organizational responses that will address the power imbalances experienced by various social groups (e.g. based on age, abilities, ethnicity etc.). Those from marginalized social locations do not have the same access to power and resources within an organizational context. Systemic oppression occurs when we see patterns of oppression negatively impacting particular marginalized groups and fail to respond.

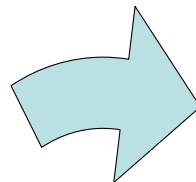
As anti-oppression allies, we must continually focus our attention on the ways in which society is structured and on the related processes within our institutions and organizations that reinforce the power of some groups (politically, economically, socially, and culturally) over others. An ultimate goal is to find ways in which we can share power.

*AO is a way of life, not this thing you can do and set aside, [it is the] lens that you're looking through the world at, people starting off at different levels. Those lens [are] affected by our histories and [affect] who we are [today], how we find each other and [how we] build that bridge to walk together.*

*- Consultation Participant, 2009*

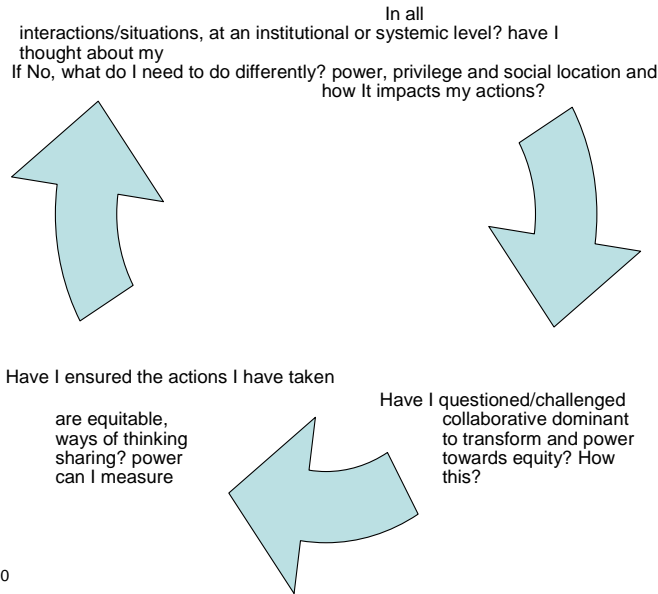
To illustrate the *process of integrating AO* into child welfare work, a diagram is presented below.

An AO



Process

If Yes, how can I promote these AO actions



Here is an example of the AO process in practice: “If I were to acknowledge that racialized and Aboriginal children are overrepresented in care.”

AO Process	Example
<p>In all interactions/situations have I thought about power, privilege, and social location and how it impacts my actions?</p>	<p>In my daily interactions, do I think about how my social location provides me power to address or not to address the issue of overrepresentation of children in care? At an individual level, do I work with children and families in a way that demonstrates that I am not the expert, and takes into account the impact of historical and systemic oppression of service users, and work from a place where I have truly listened to and understood the service user’s identified needs?</p>

<p>Have I questioned/challenged dominant ways of thinking to transform power towards equity? Equity means to treat people differently in order to create equal outcomes.</p>	<p>Do I question in what ways I am a part of the dominant way of thinking (through my social location) and in what ways can I work that do not demonstrate a place of dominance? As well, what can I do to address systemic oppression for service users?</p>
<p>Have I ensured the actions I have taken are equitable, collaborative and power sharing? How can I measure this?</p>	<p>Do I make it a point to bring up at meetings the issue of why there are so few racialized minorities or Aboriginal peoples employed at the agency even if I am not from that group, or why there are so few representatives from the community at planning meetings? Do I suggest alternative action strategies that will result in more equitable outcomes?</p>
<p>If Yes, how can I promote these AO actions at an institutional or systemic level? If no, what do I need to do differently?</p>	<p>Do I approach my work in ways that are equitable resulting in the reduction of the number of racialized and Aboriginal children in care?</p>

### Why an AO Framework?

A framework can be defined as “a particular set of rules, ideas, or beliefs which you use in order to deal with problems or to decide what to do.”<sup>1</sup> Many promising anti-oppression practices and actions have already been undertaken by those working in the field. Thus, the purpose of the framework presented in this report is to build on these existing capacities, while providing a tool that systematically documents, shares and demonstrates how anti-oppressive practices can be implemented in a way that is both comprehensive and practical.

This tool is designed to be used by everyone from front-line and administrative colleagues to senior management. As well, funders and those receiving child welfare services have a role to play in influencing the workability, relevance and value of this framework. The framework uniquely combines organizational change processes, which acknowledge how leadership and accountability are key to bringing structural changes to the organizational culture, policies, practices and services, along with an evaluation model that indicates the institutional supports

<sup>1</sup> Given the accessibility of this definition, we chose to use Google’s definition of a framework.

and processes needed to measure the action steps that can be taken to create impactful shifts in the work of the child welfare field.

According to the research literature (Eaton, 2010; Baulcomb, 2010; & Blanchard, 2010), it is difficult to shift the values of an organizational culture since existing beliefs and assumptions, which reflect the status quo, are often entrenched within the systems, policies, processes and practices of the organization. Furthermore, the implications of the various management behaviours, actions and policies often do not become evident until the organization makes a choice to do things differently from the status quo (Eaton, 2010). Therefore, the AO framework provides the steps through which to examine the processes (behaviours, actions, and policies) to inform the organization's readiness for change and then to address these changes.

The AO framework provides a tool which everyone in the organization can use to not only identify factors that reinforce the status quo, but also to identify the processes that can be implemented to support organizational change. Institutional change occurs when action strategies are identified and achieved as desired outcomes. All of these facets can be developed from the philosophy, values and practice of anti-oppression. In fact, by using an AO approach, those working in child welfare can be assured that diverse service user and staff needs are at the centre of all critically reflective and decision-making processes.

According to Dominelli (2002, p. 6), anti-oppression is "a methodology focusing on both process and outcome, and a way of structuring relationships between individuals that aim to empower users by reducing the negative effects of hierarchy in their immediate interaction and the work they do together." A key practice challenge for child welfare is the staff's ability to implement equitable practices in their daily work given resource shortages and the limitations posed by the child welfare legislative mandate itself.

Given the tendency to create inequitable processes through the daily work activities of child welfare practice, use of the AO framework can accomplish two goals: (1) it enables everyone working in the organization to identify inequitable practices; and (2) it identifies the institutional processes that can integrate the individual, group and institutional levels, in order to ensure consensus among relevant stakeholders as well as accountability on "how" and "what" is considered to be both an anti-oppressive process and outcome.

According to Eaton (p. 42), "if you want to change the results you will have to change the systems, culture and process that deliver the results." Eaton (2010) identifies several key elements of any organizational change process, including (1) measuring changes made in both process and outcomes should be everybody's responsibility, not just management; (2) management can support the change processes, but all individuals in the organization need to be involved in doing the work; (3) flexibility needs to be allowed in the process of change since no one way of doing it can work; although analyzing whether it is anti-oppressive in its approach should be continuously assessed and evaluated; (4) allowing those who are already doing antioppressive work to help in making the changes needed to adapt and evolve in order to keep this work moving forward.

For any organizational change process to be successful, all those working in the organization must be invested in and accountable for making it happen. However, there are also two further key strategies that must be taken into consideration. First, service users along with their communities must be a part of the process and given opportunities to influence the internal processes and mechanisms of the organization.

Second, external contributions from those who are knowledgeable about anti-oppression, inclusion and diversity should also be encouraged. Creating change within organizations can be challenging and, therefore, expecting staff and management to solely create the changes that are required is not realistic. Using external individuals who have in-depth knowledge of organizational change processes, developing and administering an external audit process, or developing different service approaches, for example, serves as a check and balance to assess the internal workings of the organization. It can also act as a valuable resource to help facilitate and support those who are interested and engaged in learning about the change process.

## **B. The Consultation Process**

### **Purpose**

According to Henry & Tator (2006, p. 305), Children's Aid Societies are organizations that have "a socio-political system in which people act together under an imposed structure and ideology and use a specific set of technologies to achieve a specific objective." The socio-political system set out in child welfare can be arranged to adopt more inclusionary practices or, can by default, maintain the status quo, and thus be explicitly exclusionary by not addressing obvious structural inequalities. By seeking various stakeholders' input on what anti-oppression means in child welfare, we were able to devise meaning to the organizational practices that are currently carried out in various Children's Aid Societies.

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The development of the framework was informed by a province-wide consultation process with those working in child welfare. The consultation process sought their opinions about “what” an anti-oppression framework would look like, along with “how” it could be implemented and sustained.

The results of the consultations affirmed that participants were ready to critically examine their own agencies, structures and processes. Why? It is because these structures, policies and processes in child welfare agencies that appear seemingly fair and neutral (Yee, 2005), in fact, may be unwittingly imposing oppressive practices upon families and children.

## **Methodology**

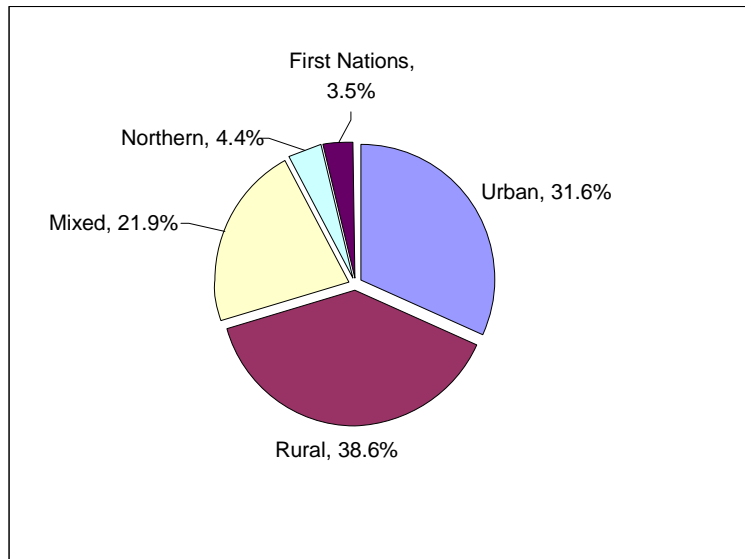
Consultations were held in each of the provincial zones between the months of December 2009 and February 2010. Specifically, they included Central, Grand River, South West, Eastern, North and North East zones, plus one consultation with the Ontario Association of Children Aid Societies. Child welfare leaders, including executive directors, human resource directors and directors of services were invited along with front-line and manager colleagues. All participants of the consultations were provided, in advance, with a copy of the *Anti-Oppression in Child Welfare - Laying the Foundation Change: A Discussion Paper* prepared by The Ontario Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable in October 2008 (Grant & Ojo, 2008).

The consultation process was conducted by two rotating facilitators from the Child Welfare AntiOppression Roundtable. Detailed notes were taken by another Roundtable volunteer. There were 13 consultations in total, most of which were divided into separate sessions for senior leaders and other staff. Each consultation process took approximately 2 hours. See Appendices A and B for a list of the consultation questions as well as key findings that helped inform the development of the AO framework.

Although there was participation from all zones in the consultation process, the findings represent the views only of those who participated. Every effort was made to solicit a wide variety of representation via email, networks, invitations from zone directors and other usual communication venues. Note that Aboriginal populations did participate in the consultation process; however, their unique issues are not covered within the scope of this report.

## **Participation Profile**

A total of 109 participants from 44 different Children’s Aid Societies, including the Ontario Association of Children Aid Societies participated in the consultation process. In total, 83% of all Children’s Aid Societies participated in the consultations. The range of size of staff at agencies varied from 44 to 375. A mix of urban (31.6%), rural (38.6%), mixed (21.9%), Northern (4.4%) and First Nations (3.5%) types of agencies participated in the consultation process.



### Five Key Recommendations

The findings from the consultation process were used to inform the development of the framework. One of the consultation questions taken from the *Anti-Oppression in Child Welfare: Laying the Foundation for Change* discussion paper asked: “What would need to change in the following areas to reflect anti-oppression principles: (1) leadership and accountability, (2) learning and development, (3) human resource practices, (4) supervision, (5) communication, (6) service and program delivery, (7) community partnerships, and (8) feedback and complaints?”

From these key areas, participants identified the following as instrumental sites of change for anti-oppression work: communication, learning and development, HR practices, involving service users, supervision, and working with the community.

In the anti-oppression framework, these ‘sites of change for anti-oppression work’ can be identified as the areas requiring levers. Levers are processes and mechanisms that support institutional change towards anti-oppression outcomes.

Based on the findings of the consultations, five key recommendations about child welfare emerged, all of which support the creation of an AO framework.

#### Recommendation # 1

**Anti-oppression in child welfare requires a change of culture reflected in the agency’s work along with a focus on changes in the outcomes of child welfare.**



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“(Ultimately) leadership and staff body would no \*longer+ question whether oppression exists, everyone would have an understanding of oppression, and actively work to \*understand+ their role in oppression and the people they work with.”

“We have to do an analysis on the fact that when we as an agency succeed, \*keeping kids out of care+ we get punished financially.”

“\*I would like to+ envision our staff \*being out+ in the community more, \*including+ community based schools, housing, money for groups [such as] a housing group, [or] a group that the community wants...[We need to] be flexible. [We] need flexibility in money and in numbers.”

“\*We should ask+ what does a child need to be successful?”

## Recommendation #2

**Anti-oppression should not be an add-on to the organization, it should be embedded in the values, mission, policies, processes and practices in the organization at all levels.**

“It has to be a live agenda and the way to make it live is to create mechanisms to ensure that AO is an ongoing discussion...Our agencies need to use this model to come back again and again to the fundamental questions related to AO practices and programs. AO should be reflected in all of our surveys and other mechanisms to promote people buying in and accepting the related outcomes. Whatever we develop it needs to be used to promote and nurture staff, not punish.”

“Our responsibility (is) to figure out \*how+ the policies around AO are alive \*in our+ practices \*and+ are embedded in our work.”

## Recommendation #3

**Anti-oppression is both a process and an outcome where progress is measurable as demonstrated change within the organization’s work.**

“(AO should be from an) outcomes based perspective –know where AO is working; [see] if the conversations are happening; [see] if we are identifying what our struggles are, and [know] what that [would] look like. [This would] enable us to work in an AO way, [and] not just that we have 11 brochures in different languages.”

“Critical pieces \*to this work+ are what are the core competencies of AO? Who develops them and how are they monitored? What are the levels of accountability that needs to be in place? What does service delivery look like? [It should be] something measurable. No matter which CAS [clients that we are talking about], [they] should be experiencing the same thing.”

“\*The+ framework has to be clear in terms of what the intended outcome is. It must be articulated very clearly, and everything in that framework has to be clear on what it is and what it would look like and how it would make a difference for families.”

#### **Recommendation #4**

**Agencies need to create a culture of openness and safety when implementing anti-oppression work.**

“Having these dialogues safely in an agency, \*such as+ what is your social location? \*What is+ your value base? [I] think this is the first step in saying these are the issues, [and that] advocacy won’t come until we feel safe to address it.”

“Building blocks \*are where+ one is creating \*a+ safe space to have that courageous conversation. Training also need[s] time --time [to] talk in supervision, [and] time to bring the training to light for each person.”

“We need to be able to use our voice and not be blamed.”

#### **Recommendation # 5**

**More data on who we are serving and what we are doing in child welfare is necessary in order to be able to come up with better solutions.**

“Once we analyze this kind of data from a critical and research standpoint, \*then+ we’re able to come up with better solutions.”

### **C. The Anti-Oppression Framework**

## Features of the Framework

Uniquely, this framework combines the use of an organizational change process along with a logic model. An organizational change process recognizes the hierarchical nature of decisionmaking processes which logically show the ways in which activities are carried out within the procedural requirements of an organization. It aims to find ways to make changes in the organizational culture towards a particular value set (Fullan, 1993). A logic model can be defined as: “a logical description of how the project theoretically works to benefit the target group. The narrative description of the applicant’s project must tie goals, activities, outputs and outcomes together in a logical fashion.”<sup>2</sup>

Imagine if an anti-oppression approach were placed at the centre of the purpose of the organizational change process and logic model, how would decision-making and feedback from stakeholders look different? How would they differ from the organization’s usual way of managing its processes and outcomes, which typically does not have a means for incorporating outside input? The anti-oppression approach itself requires that both the process and outcome (Dominelli, 2003) of the organizational activities are examined for any inequitable processes that result in systemic/institutional barriers for both those working in the organization and to those receiving services.

*To make all of these connections work, then, all users of the framework must integrate an individual, group and institutional (organizational) response in order to demonstrate ‘real’ antioppression work* (H. Wong & J. Yee, 2010, personal communication, March 2, 2010)

Accordingly, the Anti-Oppression Framework involves both an identification and discussion of the challenges in implementing AO, as well as the processes or mechanisms involved in supporting anti-oppression work. This allows for assessment as to whether there are areas that need to be structured differently within the agency in order to achieve AO outcomes. Once the process is identified, actions steps can be developed to meet the intended outcomes. For example, once an AO action is taken by an *individual*, there should be a related *group* and institutional (organizational) response to ensure accountability and real change. In order for behaviours to change, they must be influenced by the organizational values (anti-oppression approach) as well as by the functional responsibilities and values of the individuals working within the agency (Henry & Tator, 2006).

## Steps of the Framework

*(We) know we are working in AO if the conversations are happening; if we are identifying what our struggles are and what that looks like. [This is what] enables us to work in an AO way.*

*- Consultation Participant, 2009*

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<sup>2</sup> Given the accessibility of this definition, we chose to use Google’s definition of a logic model

The Anti-Oppression Framework for Child Welfare has been developed as an analytical and practical tool that can be used to help individuals, teams and agencies to systematically and consistently identify both the processes and actions necessary to achieve anti-oppression outcomes. In essence, it is a roadmap within a flexible, holistic and ongoing approach to support anti-oppression in child welfare.

The Framework can be used regardless of what stage an organization is at with AO, what resources it has or does not have, or what type of agency it is, (e.g. rural, urban, Northern, Francophone, or Aboriginal). The Framework also helps to identify how anti-oppression can be linked to the roles and function of individuals (Henry & Tator, 2006), and which processes and mechanisms will help support anti-oppression.

The Framework combines an organizational change process (steps 1-4) and a logic model (steps 5-8) to facilitate the implementation of anti-oppression in child welfare. Below is a brief overview of the steps involved in implementing the framework. See p. 23, for the conceptual diagram of Steps 1-4. See p. 26, for the conceptual diagram of Steps 5-8. The complete antioppression framework which illustrates Step 1 – 8 is on p. 27.

## **Organizational Change Process – Using Steps 1 - 4**

### ***Step 1: Identify the Intended Outcome(s)***

#### **Identify the Intended Outcome(s)**

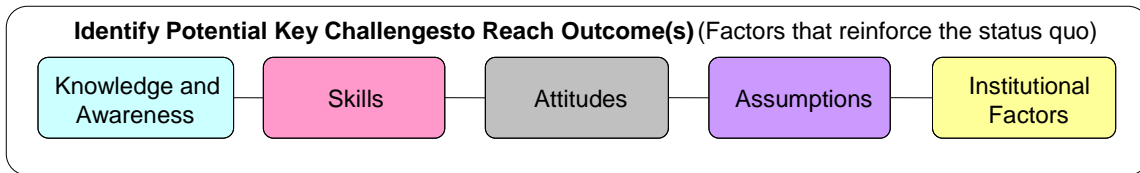
Outcomes can be defined as the intended end results. This first step involves identifying these intended end results in order to implement a series of anti-oppression processes, activities and actions. All outcomes should be measurable and attainable. All intended outcome(s) must be explicitly focused on an anti-oppressive outcome that specifically benefits marginalized communities. Typically, there should not be more than five outcomes. Additionally, all remaining steps in the framework should be linked to the outcomes that are developed from this first step. Note that outcomes can be modified during different steps, as new situations arise. Thus, there should be an ongoing assessment of the outcomes at each step to ensure that they are still meeting stakeholder needs and assess how they are impacting service users. Step 5, the beginning of the logic model, is a reminder to revisit the outcomes developed in Step 1 to reflect on whether there should be any revisions or changes.

Examples of potential outcomes could be:

- a. An agency that actively works at eliminating the disproportionate number of children from marginalized groups in care.

- b. Children, families and other community stakeholders are involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of child welfare services.
- c. The needs and circumstances of those who are marginalized are central in determining how child welfare services are structured.
- d. A learning organization where everyone feels safe to be challenged.

**Step 2: Identify Potential Key Challenges**



Key challenges are the factors that reinforce the status quo. There are five types of challenges:

- 1) **Knowledge and Awareness:** identifying these challenges will engage the agency openly in a discussion on whether staff, Board members, foster parents and volunteers have the necessary knowledge and awareness to integrate AO in their daily work; and, if not, what strategies are needed?
- 2) **Skills:** identifying these challenges will engage the agency in an exploration of the ability of staff, Board of Directors, foster parents and volunteers on how to do AO work.
- 3) **Attitudes:** identifying these challenges will reveal the extent to which individuals/agency culture/sector believe in the importance of achieving AO outcomes.
- 4) **Assumptions:** identifying these challenges will open the discussion about judgments and pre-conceived notions rooted in participants’ social location (age, class, gender, race, sexual orientation) about what AO is. This often includes identifying fears and concerns.
- 5) **Institutional:** identifying these challenges will open the discussion about tangible factors such as capacity, funding, limitations and constraints with respect to what the agency believes is necessary to support AO work.

**Step 3: Ask Questions**

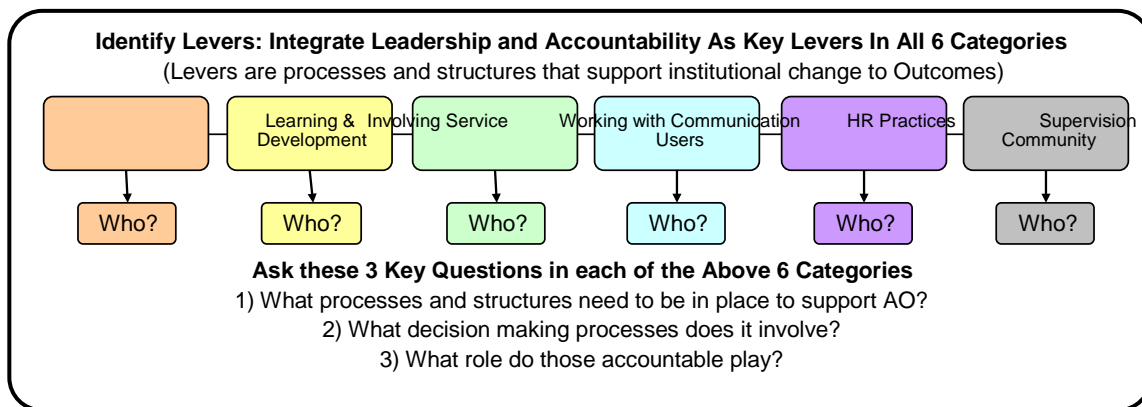
**Ask Questions**  
(These questions challenge the Status Quo)

Following a thorough reflection about the Key Challenges, this step involves the development of questions and solutions that individuals, teams and organizations can use to challenge the status quo. This helps participants understand where they and their organization is situated with respect to the identified AO outcomes. By doing so, they can work towards promoting an environment that discusses openly and honestly the existing challenges and constraints.

Example of questions are:

- a) Do management, staff, foster parents, and volunteers examine how their power and privilege can perpetuate the marginalization of social groups? (and, if so, how?)
- b) As an agency, is there an expectation that staff, foster parents, volunteers understand how to work from an AO approach?
- c) As an agency, is there fear about anti-oppression and how it may change the organization?
- d) What is the current culture of the agency?
- e) Does the current funding formula contribute to the overrepresentation of children from marginalized groups in care? And, if so, what actions can be undertaken to challenge this?

**Step 4: Identify Levers**



Levers are processes (formal and informal) that create the conditions for anti-oppression practice. Examples include leadership commitment, accountability (having a person who is responsible to ensure anti-oppression goals are met), ensuring various communication outlets exist to increase service user input in decision making policies, and providing opportunities to talk about anti-oppression at team and supervisory meetings.

This step involves the identification of the processes and structures that support the outcomes previously developed in Step 2. Also, within this step, are three key questions to facilitate the identification of levers as well as to indicate *who* will provide *leadership* and *accountability* within each of the categories. The six categories (determined from the consultations as the major areas that should be addressed for AO to occur) are:

1. Communication
2. Learning and Development
3. Human Resource (HR) Practices
4. Involving Service Users
5. Supervision
6. Working with the Community

The three key questions to ask within each of the six categories are:

1. What processes and structures need to be in place to support AO?
2. What decision-making processes are involved?
3. What role do those who are accountable play?

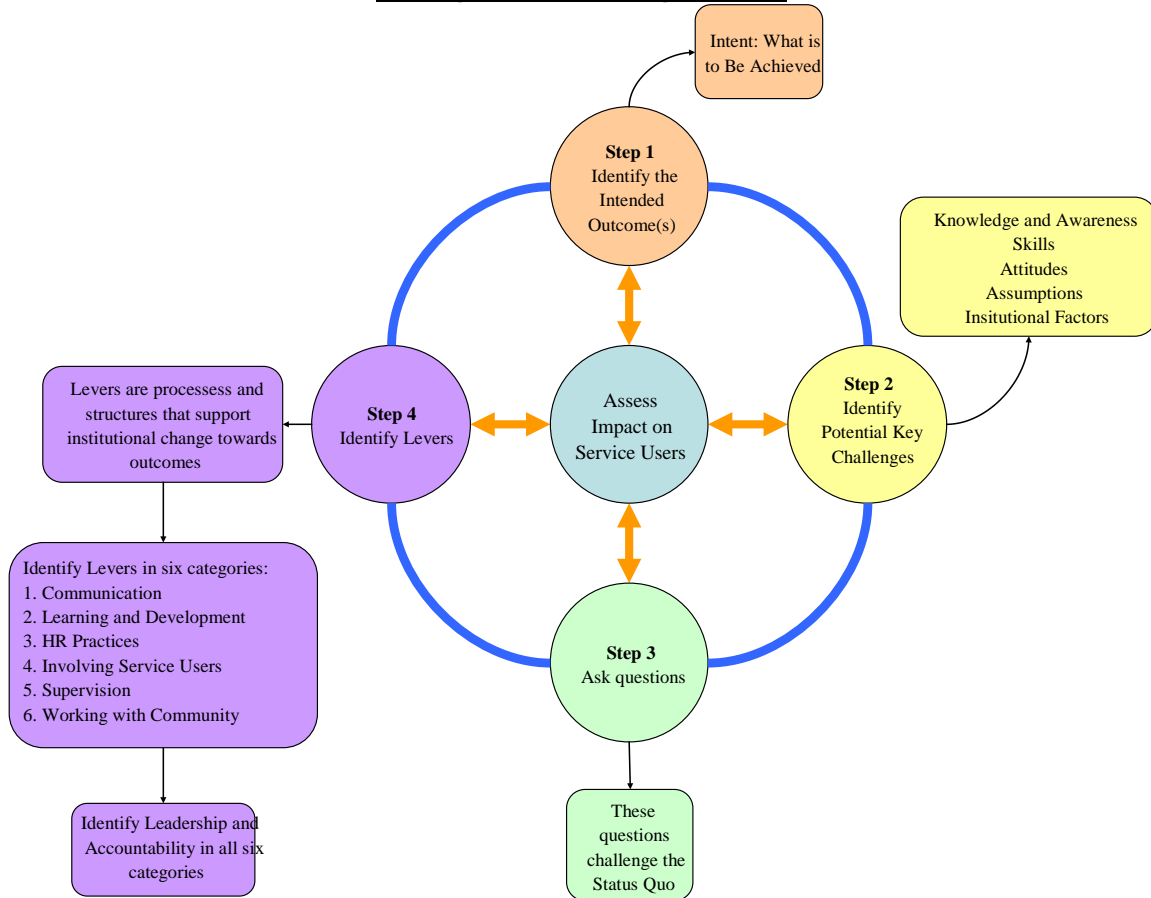
***Assess Impact on Service Users throughout the Process***

Through each of the steps, it is necessary to continually assess how decisions in this process impact service users, e.g. intent versus impact.

A well-defined organizational change process is foundational to developing action strategies because it allows for the identification of intended outcomes (Step 1) as well as sets the foundation for a purposeful, focused, transparent, and authentic dialogue that identifies and examines solutions to challenges (Steps 2 & 3). Lastly, Step 4 involves the identification of supports and mechanisms required for institutional change. Involving key stakeholders, including service users, at each step increases the likelihood for anti-oppression outcomes. It also promotes buy-in by everyone that will result in lasting and effective change. Multilevel buyin is key to legitimatizing the organizational change process.

The following diagram depicts the Organizational Change Process Steps 1-4.

**The Organizational Change Process**



Wong & Yee, 2010

**Logic Model of the Framework – Using Steps 5 - 8**

The logic model section of the Framework (Steps 5-8) involves: revisit the outcomes developed in Step 1 (Step 5); identify the necessary resources and supports to achieve outcomes (Step 6); develop individual, group and institutional/systemic action strategies (Step 7); and develop indicators which will measure progress towards outcomes (Step 8).

**Step 5: Revisit Outcomes/Assess Impact on Service Users**

To begin the logic model, it is important to revisit the outcomes developed in Step 1 as well as to assess the impact on service users of decisions made during the organizational change process (completed Steps 1-4) to ensure that they are still relevant and have a positive impact on service users.

**Step 6: Shift Institutional Challenges into AO Opportunities**

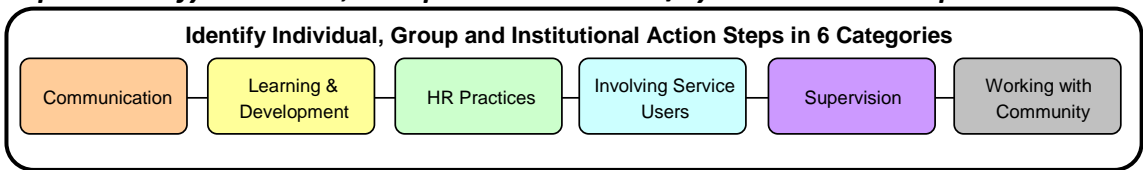


**Shift Institutional Challenges into AO Opportunities**  
 (This involves identifying institutional supports that have power to reject (challenges) or adopt (opportunities) changes)

This next step involves identifying the institutional (organizational) supports that can influence whether changes in the institution are accepted or rejected.

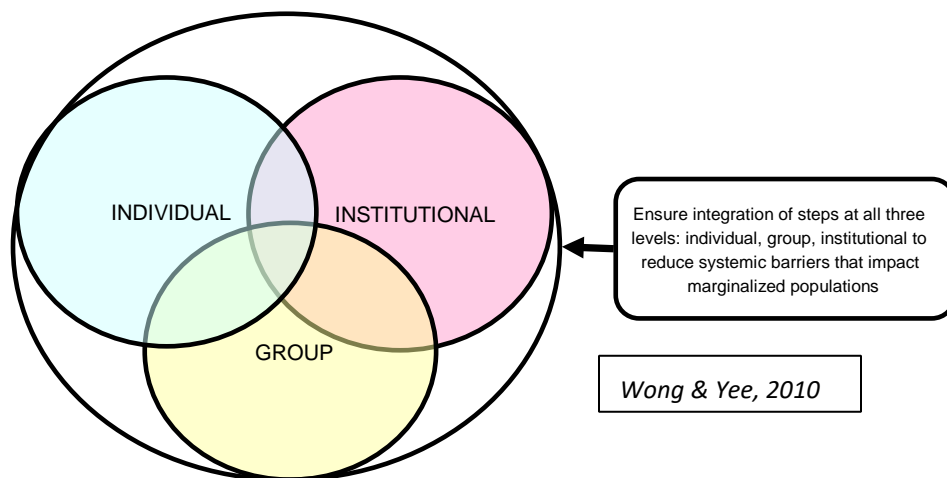
An example of institutional supports may be recognizing the work of staff who participate in AO committees and activities through, for example, workloads that take this into account.

**Step 7: Identify Individual, Group and Institutional/Systemic Action Steps**



This step involves the identification of individual, group and institutional/systemic action steps to achieve the intended outcomes (from Step 1). Action steps require the *integration* of an individual, group and institutional/systemic response. That is, for every *individual* action taken, there is a related *group and institutional/systemic* response. This integration promotes sustainability and institutional support that will result in systemic change.

The following diagram depicts the necessary interrelationship among individual, group and institutional actions.



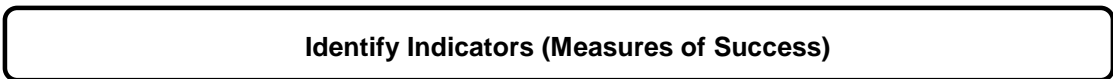
Below is an illustration of an integrated individual, group and institutional/systemic action steps within the “Human Resources Practices” category:

Individual	Group	Institutional/Systemic
All agency staff demonstrate AO knowledge and skills	Team meetings are structured to allow time for shared discussion and development of AO knowledge and skills	AO knowledge and skills are a criteria in performance reviews

Individual, group and institutional/systemic action steps are created for each of the six categories named in Step 4. Once again, these six categories are:

1. Communication
2. Learning and Development
3. HR Practices
4. Involving Service Users
5. Supervision
6. Working with the Community

**Step 8: Identify Indicators of Success**

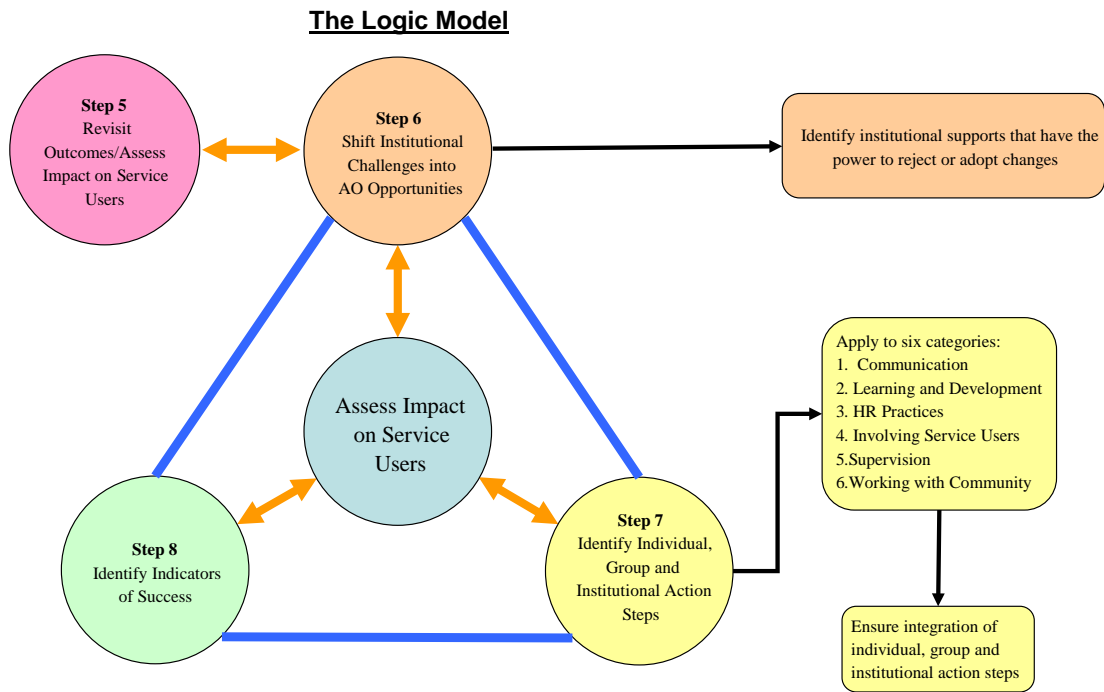


This step involves identifying measurable results that show that the agency has been successful in meeting all the action steps. Examples include:

- a) Agency staff are able to describe how they have demonstrated AO knowledge and skills in practice.
- b) 100% of team meetings provide discussion of AO.
- c) AO knowledge and skill are criteria in all performance reviews.

As with the organizational change process, while working through the logic model (steps 5-8), the impact of decisions on stakeholders must be continually assessed.

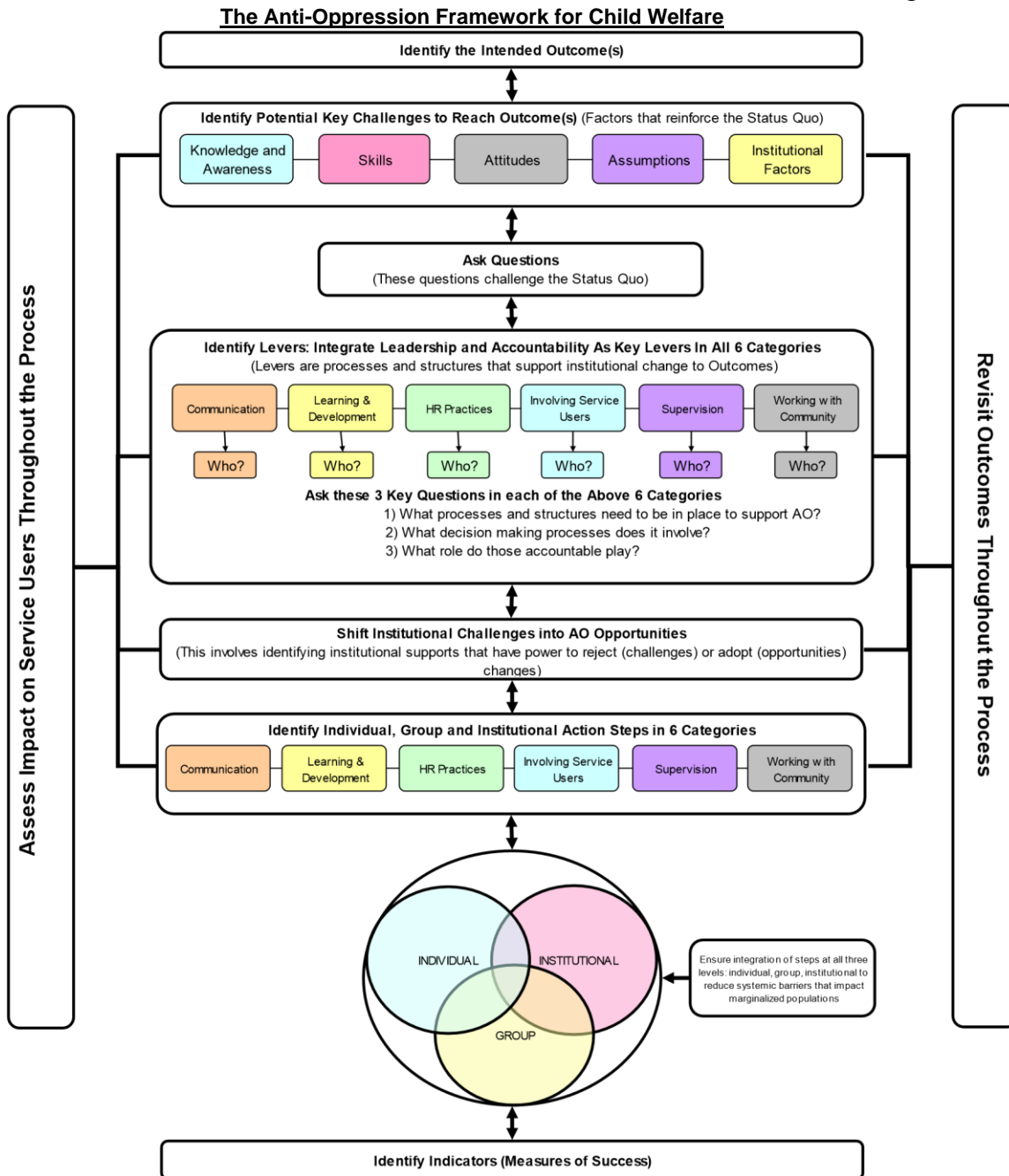
The following diagram depicts the Logic Model using Steps 5 – 8.



Wong & Yee, 2010

**Diagram of the Anti-Oppression Framework**

This following diagram illustrates the complete Framework which combines the organizational change process (Steps 1-4) and the logic model (Steps 5-8).



Wong & Yee, 2010

## D. Conclusion

As evidenced through the provincial consultations, there are many examples where antioppressive practices are already occurring in the child welfare field. It has also become clear that integrating the individual, group and institutional level responses of anti-oppressive work, which explores both process and outcome, is the necessary next step. Doing this embeds such practices systemically and consistently within the system to ensure sustainability. This strategy

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is supported by the 2005 paper, “Developing a Collaborative Intervention Model,” (2005, p. 8) which noted that: “intervention at the micro level is inextricably linked to macro issues such as agency culture, government initiatives and the relationships that agencies have with their communities.” The Anti-Oppression Framework provides a tool with sufficient flexibility to enable any individual, team or agency to examine these relationship and processes.

The Framework brings together an organizational change process with a logic model to guide the process of change. It recognizes that anti-oppressive practice is not just about the individual level of work, but rather an awareness that these actions must also be linked to measurable systemic outcomes. As Strega & Carrière (2009) conclude, given the tendency for a system to not change and to reinforce the status quo, it becomes easy to treat inequalities as part of the technical challenges in the system. An anti-oppressive approach, however, requires an understanding of the differences between ourselves as related to our own power and positionality within systems. It assists in the examination of the interrelationships among assumptions, behaviours, actions, and the processes that prevent or support anti-oppression.

To carry out this work, it may also be beneficial to have those who have in-depth knowledge in the area of diversity, organizational change and oppression help to facilitate this process of change to encourage an outside-in perspective of the organization (Fullan, 1993). Above all, it is important to emphasize that when engaging in any anti-oppressive organizational process work, service users and their communities (Dumbrill, 2003) must be a part of the process and have influence on the internal processes and mechanisms of the organization. Such external perspectives will help to provide essential feedback as part of the ongoing assessment since they are the ones who are most impacted by the organization’s decisions made with respect to resources and supports. This is the only way to ensure that good intentions have good impact.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Consultation Questions

**Ontario Child Welfare**

**Anti-Oppression Roundtable**

## Why is an Anti-Oppression Perspective Important and Necessary in Child Welfare?

“The child welfare system continues to be implicated in the oppression experienced by marginalized groups in society. Marginalized groups include those who are from First Nations, not white, single mothers, people living below the poverty line, person with disabilities, immigrants, people for whom English is a second language, people who do not identify as heterosexual”

- from “Anti-Oppression in Child Welfare: Laying the Foundation for Change”,  
Discussion Paper 2009

Members from these marginalized groups face greater chance of entering care.

Child A	Child B
Age 5 to 9	Age 5 to 9
No dependence on social assistance	Household head receives income supports
Two parent family	Single adult household
Three or fewer children	Four or more children
White	Mixed Ethnic Origin
Owner-Occupied Home	Privately Rented Home
More rooms than people	One or more persons per room
<b>Odds are 1 in 7,000</b>	<b>Odds are 1 in 10</b>

Jones, J. (1994). Child protection and anti-oppressive practice: The dynamics of Partnership with parents explored. *Early Child Development and Care*, 102(2), 101-114.

### Anti-Oppression Framework Consultation Questions

1. Imagine that you went to sleep one night and, when you woke up, your agency had been transformed into an organization that reflected anti-oppressive practice, policies, processes and structures. Its service outcomes would no longer look like the Jones chart (see handout). What would it now look like in the following areas?



- Leadership
  - Learning and Development
  - Human Resource Practices
  - Supervision
  - Communication (staff to staff, with service users)
  - Service and Program Delivery
  - Community Partnerships
  - Feedback and Complaints Processes
  - Service user involvement
  - Relationship with service users
  - Accountability
2. What would need to change in the child welfare sector in order to support the AO vision created above?
  3. What components do you think an AO framework needs to have?
  4. How might an AO framework be integrated within your agency (i.e. quality improvement, accountability, transformation agenda, sustainability, strengths-based practice, etc.)?
  5. Can you think of current examples of AO practices/policies/strategies within your agency or elsewhere?
  6. What opportunities exist to support AO work?
  7. What do you think are the biggest challenges in implementing an AO framework? How might these be overcome?
  8. What resources or partnerships might be accessed to support an AO framework?

**Appendix B: Key Findings of the Consultation**

1. There needs to be buy-in from leadership.

“Engage leaders including the Ministry to supply resources and support. They need to promote and support.”
“(AO) needs to be a part of a standing agenda with management to keep the momentum going.”
“We need agency and provincial champions.”

2. Accountability at all levels is required.

“Agency would be one that takes a stance. If it’s saying, “we are saying no to oppression and if something like this happens, then this is how we are going to react.”
--

“Our committee has struggled with who is accountable when we have workers that are not following our practice. What happens when it’s not acceptable? We’ve found that there hasn’t been a lot of accountability when it’s not in practice.”

3. AO training should be purposeful, sequenced and integrated. Examples include: basic awareness training, being an ally, supervisory communication, foster parent AO training.

“Learning and development training for staff around facets of AO would be well integrated into the training calendars of the organizations.”

“Curriculum – making sure that we are collaborating with the Anti-Oppression Roundtable. [We need to+ get a lens of what is going out the door.”

4. Ensuring families and communities’ input in service delivery is essential.

“Clients need to be involved in the development of policies and practices.”

“Giving power to the (service users) to evaluate the effectiveness of our services in this area. We need linkages at every level of our system from OACAS board down to agency boards.”

“Our complaint mechanism seems to result in us labelling the complaint as a symptom of the service user’s pathology. We need to become more secure with the work that we do so that we can stand up to the challenges and accept valid points identified by service users rather than become defensive. The hard part of that is our accountability with audits, etc.”

“Be receptive to feedback in relation to anti-oppression practice.”

“If you are truly anti-oppression then [we] want to hear what someone has to say and discuss it.”

5. Ensure that AO is integrated in supervision.

“Building diversity/anti-oppression as a part of supervision.”

“Supervisory role modelling behaviour (is important)...also encouraging different ways, different ways of thinking, taking it back to who is the client, who are we engaged with and looking at them from their historical context and the context placed on the client. [We need to] look at all the contextual pieces of someone’s life.”

“Allow AO conversation in supervision \*as this+ can give people tools \*and+ help engage them in \*AO+ language and do it.”

“The other thing is supervision with a worker. When talking about the families we would include some reflection on the impact of social policy, where the directives come down from, \*and+ how they can or can’t access services, etc.”

6. Examine HR practices in relation to AO (i.e. advertising, interviewing, hiring, orientation, performance management, complaints process).

“Theme of HR processes really need to look at who is working in your agency, \*be able to+ influence who is recruited, how studies are conducted [and how] decisions [are] made around HR policies, \*looking at who we are+ interviewing...,”

- a. Hiring

“(Staff should have an) understanding of foundational concepts of AO work and theory; we are not requiring those from people if they \*do not know AO+...\*that’s+ great, but if it’s not embedded in our practice as a requirement, [then we need to] hire more people with more [knowledge and practice of AO].”

“In terms of HR practices, it would be good to get some competency framework models in terms of recruitment to ensure [those who are] coming in [that] they have some concept of AO, [and that they+ understand where they are coming from.”

“Who we bring into our organizations in terms of background and credential\*s+ needs to be expanded.”

“Clients like to walk in to see people like themselves, also for me what they are seeing, how it is decorated [and] what does the agency decor say to me? [Can] everyone find something of themselves \*in this agency?+”

- b. Orientation

“Orientation \*is+ when you come into the agency \*and there is an+ AO expectation.”

- c. Performance Management

“\*From a performance management perspective, performance appraisal does not look at diversity. It is very focused on meeting standards, writing, etc. It should represent capacity to capture skills \*related to diversity+.”

“If you have performance issues, how would you deal with this in a non-oppressive way. [How can you+ be honest, clear, transparent, respectful and talk in behavioural terms?”

d. Implement an Incident Reporting Process

<p>“If I had somewhere to take incidents *then+ I *would+ have taken it there. People want that.”</p> <p>“*We+ need strategies for dealing with incidents, etc.”</p>
--

7. Use of AO language/communication is needed in child welfare.

<p>“*The+ language we utilize is, at times... *the+ majority of time*s+ is aggressive *in child welfare+. From *the+ first phone call *to when we’re+ working with families. *We have+ to start looking at language and looking at families as people...not just people *who+ have to use our services.”</p>
--

8. Coaching and opportunities for leadership be provided.

<p>“I think as a leader [I ask] is there a way that we can get some of the mentoring opportunities that staff is getting?”</p>
--

**Appendix C: Using the Framework**

**Step 1: Identify the Intended Outcomes**

For this example, the proposed intended outcome is:

An agency that strives to reduce the disproportionate number of children in care from marginalized groups.

**Step 2: Identify Potential Key Challenges**

Types of Challenges	Definition of Challenge	Factors
<i>Knowledge and Awareness</i>	Identifying Knowledge and Awareness challenges will engage the agency openly in a discussion on whether staff, Board members, foster parents and volunteers have the necessary knowledge and awareness to integrate AO in their daily work; and if not, what strategies are needed?	The Board of Directors, staff, foster parents, volunteers have difficulty in acknowledging their power.

<i>Skills</i>	Identifying these challenges will engage the agency in exploring the ability of staff, Board of Directors, foster parents and volunteers to do AO work.	Many of the staff believe in antioppression as an important value but have difficulty knowing how to be more anti-oppressive in their work.
<i>Attitudes</i>	Identifying these challenges will reveal the extent to which individuals/agency culture/sector believe in the importance of achieving anti-oppression outcomes.	There may be reluctance to address this issue either because it is not seen as a real problem or is seen as something outside of the agency's control.  There are people in the agency/sector who believe that focusing attention on disproportionate representation of children from marginalized groups may take away attention from other service priorities.
<i>Assumptions</i>	Identifying these challenges will open the discussion about judgments and pre-conceptions rooted in participants' social location (age, class, gender, race, sexual orientation) about what	There is an assumption that marginalized groups have more issues and this is why there are higher rates of admission to care rather than it being the result of institutional/systemic barriers.
	AO is, which often includes identifying fears and concerns.	
<i>Institutional</i>	Identifying these challenges will also open the discussion about tangible factors such as capacity, funding, limitations and constraints with respect to what the agency believes is necessary to support AO work.	There is a feeling that addressing this issue takes up too much time and resources.

**Step 3: Ask Questions** (related to the outcome)

These questions (that relate to the outcome) may include:

How can we reduce the number of children in care from marginalized groups?

How can we shift the funding formula to encourage the reduction of children in care from marginalized groups?

### Step 4: Identify Levers

To review, levers are defined as processes and mechanisms that address the above challenges to support institutional change as well as decide who is responsible for ensuring that the goals are met within each area. There are six key areas; Communication, Learning and Development, HR Practices, Involving Service Users, Supervision, and Working with the Community. In each key area, there are three questions to ask and answer:

- 1) What processes and mechanisms need to be structured and in place for AO?
- 2) What decision making processes are involved?
- 3) What role will those who are accountable play?

6 Key Categories	3 Key Questions	An Example
<b>Communication</b>	1) What processes and mechanisms need to be structured and in place for AO? 2) What decision making processes does it involve? 3) What role will those who are accountable play?	1) An assessment of values and the assumptions underlying the type of language used in documentation as well as in the interactions with service users is needed. 2) The decision-making processes are transparent and centre on marginalized groups providing input. 3) Those who are accountable ensure input provided by marginalized groups is
<b>6 Key Categories</b>	<b>3 Key Questions</b>	<b>An Example</b>
		used to create changes in communication.
<b>HR Practices</b>	1) What processes and mechanisms need to be structured and in place for AO? 2) What decision making processes does it involve? 3) What role will those who are accountable play?	1) Hiring teams are able to openly discuss preferences, values, biases, and assumptions that they have. 2) The hiring committee examines who is missing from the committee and invites others who have AO values to be part of the hiring process. 3) The one who is accountable for creating the hiring committee will ensure that there is equitable representation.
<b>Involving Service Users</b>	1) What processes and mechanisms need to be structured and in place for AO? 2) What decision making processes does it involve?	1) Staff acknowledge systemic barriers experienced by service users. 2) Service users identify their needs and partner in the creation of their case plan. 3) Those who are accountable

	3) What role will those who are accountable play?	ensure that service users' identified needs are central to the service provided.
<b>Learning and Development</b>	1) What processes and mechanisms need to be structured and in place for AO? 2) What decision making processes does it involve? 3) What role will those who are accountable play?	1) The identification of gaps and root of gaps in existing training programs are investigated. External input (outside of the agency) from those who have indepth knowledge are involved. 2) Front line staff lead in deciding how the content of AO is incorporated into all training. 3) Those who are accountable ensure that the input from staff is incorporated.
<b>Supervision</b>	1) What processes and mechanisms need to be structured and in place for AO? 2) What decision-making processes does it involve? 3) What role will those who are accountable play?	1) Allocate time in team and supervision meetings to talk about the dynamics of power and privilege in interactions with service users. 2) Collaboration with staff and supervisors in regards to the conditions of discussion. 3) Incorporate staff feedback.
<b>Working with the Community</b>	1) What processes and mechanisms need to be structured and in place for AO? 2) What decision making processes does it involve? 3) What role will those who are accountable play?	1) Conditions of safety are created so that input from the community can be expressed and actual changes are discussed and/or implemented. 2) Consult with members from marginalized communities on how safety can be created. 3) Those who are accountable ensure that the input from the community is carried through.

**Step 5: Revisit Outcomes/ Assess Impact on Service Users**

The agency would need to decide after going through the process of Steps 1-5, whether there is any need to revisit outcomes.

The original outcome (completed in Step 1) is:

An agency that strives to reduce the disproportionate number of children in care from marginalized groups.

Based on going through Steps 1-4, this outcome appears to still to be relevant and therefore will remain the same for Steps 6-8. Upon reflecting on the decisions made while going through the first four steps, it has been determined that the decisions do have a positive impact on service users.

**Step 6: Shift Institutional Supports from Challenges to AO Opportunities**

Institutional supports that can shift challenges to opportunities include:

Agency reporting mechanisms to the Ministry have a section on how the agency is working to reduce the overrepresentation of children in care from marginalized groups.

**Step 7: Identify Individual, Group and Institutional/Systemic Action Steps**

Individual	Group	Institutional/Systemic Action Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff report how they have demonstrated strategies and services that have reduced the number of admissions of children to care from marginalized groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of the agency performance reviews, staff are encouraged and expected to report on how they demonstrated strategies and services that reduced the number of admissions of children to care from marginalized groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the sector, agencies are expected to report on how they have actively reduced the number of admissions of children to care from marginalized groups as a service standard.</li> </ul>

**Step 8: Identify Indicators of Success**

- The agency’s annual report to the community discusses the demonstrated strategies and services that have reduced the number of children in care from marginalized groups.
- The number of children in care from marginalized groups has reduced by 25%.

Note: Central to AO work is to ensure that the agency is addressing systemic barriers that impact marginalized populations. Therefore, every decision that is made should demonstrate how it positively impacts service users. For example, having senior leaders participate in antioppression training should result in the development of anti-oppression organizational outcomes that reduce the number of children in care from marginalized groups.



**Appendix D: How to Integrate Individual, Group and Institutional/Systemic Action Steps**

The following suggested actions have been informed by the input from the consultation participants. Participants presented some suggested AO action steps that have been integrated in this section at the individual, group and institutional/systemic level in the following key areas: Leadership, Accountability, Communication, Learning and Development, HR Practices, Involving (Collaborating) with Service Users, Supervision, Working with Community. Some of these actions may be relevant to your agency during engagement in Step 7: the identification of individual, group, institutional/systemic action steps.

**Leadership**

According to the *Anti-Oppression Roundtable Discussion Paper (2008)*, *Anti-Oppression in Child Welfare: Laying the Foundation for Change*, to become an anti-oppressive organization requires active commitment of senior leadership, and the ability to model and advocate for antioppressive practice throughout the organization. The consultations also showed the importance of leadership in modeling and leading anti-oppression work within agencies. The following quotes reflect this vision.

*(For) Leadership and staff (there) would be no question of whether oppression exists, everyone would have an understanding of oppression and would actively work [to] understand their role in oppression [in affecting] the people [that] they work with.*

- Consultation Participant, 2009

*(For) Leadership... there is an advocacy role outside of the organization to change and address oppressive issues [in] both legislative and regulatory changes.*

- Consultation Participant, 2009

*(We) see things through a very white Eurocentric lens; if you look around our leadership table you would see a sea of white – Eurocentric, Anglo-Saxon individuals which is mirrored systemically.*

-Consultation Participant, 2009

Some examples for action that Senior Leaders can provide as an integrated individual, group and institutional response are shown below. As mentioned, these recommendations have been informed by the Consultations.

Individual	Group	Institutional/Systemic
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDs at agencies specifically allocate resources and support for antioppression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At Local Directors, allocate pooled resources and support for antioppression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for decision makers, including the Ministry to provide resources and support for anti-oppression</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that AO is part of the agenda at management meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep AO as part of the standing agenda at management meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep AO as part of the agency-wide agenda</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and encourage yourself to be an agency champion in your daily work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and implement AO agency champions at the team/department level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and implement AO agency and provincial champions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be conscious of the ways in which you can support leadership and management to reflect the demographics of the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have agency activities that result in leadership and management reflecting the demographics of the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a system wide initiative that explores strategies that support leadership and management to reflect the demographics of the community</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think about the gaps in AO in your work and how that happens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate a Workplace Analysis to identify gaps, strengths, levers, and champions of AntiOppression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share findings of these gaps and the ways that you have addressed them with other agencies and stakeholders as a promising practice</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think about demonstrated ways in which AO can be a part of the vision and mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have AO explicit in the vision and mission statement and part of the strategic planning process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have AO explicit in the vision and mission statement of the child welfare sector</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be an active member of the Anti-Oppression Committee that takes action from findings based on the Workplace Analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a Board/Staff/Community Anti-Oppression Committee to take action from findings based on the Workplace Analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate a province-wide child welfare AntiOppression Committee to take action from findings based on the provincial consultations</li> </ul>

**Accountability**

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Institutional/Systemic</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop own outcomes that are aligned with antioppression principles. Examples of outcomes may include: (1) ways in which there was a demonstration of collaboration, (2) a prevention of admission into care, (3) demonstration of creative interventions within the community, (4) evidence of incorporating feedback</li> </ul>	<p>Develop AO outcomes for the agency</p>	<p>Develop AO outcomes that are applicable across the child welfare sector</p>

**Communication**

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Institutional/Systemic</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In documentation and assessments, ask about the social location of service users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Across the team, an expectation of all staff is that documentation and assessments ask about social location of the service user</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation and assessments that ask about social location of service users is standardized across the agency and sector, and it is an expectation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document AO initiatives, results, progress and achievements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is an expectation of teams to document and share AO initiatives, results, progress and achievements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to the community, AO initiatives, results, progress and achievements</li> </ul>

**Learning and Development**

*We have to move from identifying our values to examining the impact of our values on others  
- Participant Consultation, 2009*

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Institutional/Systemic</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff participate in AO training that is offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Learning and development training for staff around facets of AO would be well integrated into the training calendars of the organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is a mandatory series of AO training for all members of the child welfare sector</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Contribute AO resources and model the use of the resource</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide resource (electronic) hub for materials on AO-awareness, how to be an ally, supervising, incorporating AO in Practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is a centralized (electronic) hub for AO materials for the child welfare sector</li> </ul>

Note: The training needs would be related to the role of the participants. Suggested topics could include:

1. Anti-Oppression Awareness
2. Anti-oppression as it relates to your Work
3. Training on Language/Communication, How to Deal with Oppressive Incidents, and How to Report if You Have Been a Victim
4. Training on How to be an Ally, and
5. Training on How to Support your Staff in Anti-Oppression Work

**HR Practices**

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Institutional/Systemic</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demonstrate AO process and principles in service and HR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Policies and procedures in the agency with respect to service and HR would reflect an AO process and principles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● AO process and principles in HR are a service standard</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop a method to analyze retention rates of marginalized groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Analyze retention rates of marginalized groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Results of the analysis are used to promote equity in hiring</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Acknowledge one’s own bias in the recruitment and interviewing process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore and address bias in the recruitment and interviewing process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Biases are addressed in the recruitment and interviewing process</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demonstrate an antioppressive approach and model to others, including how to do AO work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Performance appraisals should have anti-oppression as a performance indicator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child welfare sector sees anti-oppression as a priority in the way to do work</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate for flexible professional development opportunities that meet diverse staff needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The agency provides flexible professional development opportunities according to diverse staff needs that is supported by policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide flexible professional development opportunities according to diverse staff needs is an accreditation standard</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate to respect the spiritual holidays of all staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● HR policies reflect respect for spiritual holidays of all staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Respect for spiritual holiday of all staff is embedded in HR policy across the sector</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the hiring of diverse candidates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hiring should be based on what the community needs and there should be less focus on where credentials came from, as well consideration of candidates who are internationally trained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hiring policy reflects equity</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demonstrate AO in role at agency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● AO is an expectation of the job requirement and is indicated within job postings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● AO as an expected job requirement is indicated on all agency job postings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore one’s own bias, social location and power in developing job postings, recruitment and interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Examine bias in recruitment, job postings, recruitment and interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Examination of bias in recruitment, job postings, recruitment and interview is a service standard</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Initiate a committee to complete a Policy Review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Complete a Policy Review through an AO lens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Changes in agency structures are implemented based on</li> </ul>
<b>Individual</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Institutional/Systemic</b>
		the review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide opportunities to have historically marginalized groups participate in management activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide Mentoring opportunities to support historically marginalized groups to move into management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is a formal plan in process in the child welfare sector to increase the numbers of marginalized groups in management</li> </ul>

**Involving (Collaborating) with Service Users**

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Institutional/Systemic</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure that service users are able to provide feedback to policy development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Service users are involved in developing policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Service users have direct input on legislation changes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Encourage service users to provide feedback on their experiences with service delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensuring an agency's response to service user feedback is a transparent process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The feedback from service users is used to drive service delivery</li> </ul>

**Supervision**

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Institutional/Systemic</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Role model conversations with colleagues to explore and address systemic issues faced by service users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support staff to explore and address systemic issues (oppression, heterosexism, racism, ableism, ageism etc.) faced by service users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Open acknowledgement of the systemic barriers faced by service users and finding ways to address these barriers is a routine part of the dialogue at the agency</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Supervisors support staff to use the formal complaints process when oppression has occurred</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement an agency-wide formal complaints process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feedback from the complaints process is used to improve AO practice within the agency</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Initiate conversations about social location, power and value base in relation to the impact on service users, volunteers, colleagues, and managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Leadership support staff to discuss social location, power and value base in relation to the impact on service users, volunteers, colleagues, and managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discussions lead to institutional changes in relation to addressing power differentials</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote others to be aware and conscious of their privilege and social location by role modeling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Everyone at the agency is expected to be aware and conscious of their privilege and social location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Being aware and conscious of privilege and social location creates changes in program delivery</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the importance of placing children in culturally and racially appropriate foster homes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The agency screens to place children in culturally and racially appropriate foster homes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child welfare sector recognizes it as a strategic priority to place children in culturally and racially appropriate foster homes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As a Manager, initiate the monitoring, and evaluation to ensure anti-oppression on senior management and organizational-wide agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Allocate a Lead Manager to monitor, evaluate, and ensure anti-oppression is on senior management and organizational-wide agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The monitoring and evaluation of antioppression on senior management and organizational-wide agenda leads to anti-oppressive outcomes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Initiate the discussion of the roots of oppression experienced by children and families, and propose collaborative solutions to address it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The agency has formal and informal opportunities to discuss roots of oppression experienced by children and families and propose collaborative solutions to address it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child welfare sector promotes formal and informal opportunities to discuss roots of oppression experienced by children and families and propose collaborative solutions to address it</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demonstrate principle of AO as part of engagement,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure principles of AO are part of engagement, assessment, case notes,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● AO principles as part of the engagement, assessment, case notes, service planning</li> </ul>
<b>Individual</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Institutional/Systemic</b>
assessment, case notes, service planning and service delivery	service planning, and service delivery	and service delivery a service standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocate for service users in one's role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The agency provides recognition of those who advocate for service users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child welfare sector recognizes those who advocate for service users</li> </ul>

### Working with the Community

*“Giving up power means being inclusive of all groups, [that is] all of the marginalized groups. [It means] having representation from these groups and having joint decision-making about policy, procedures and practices”*

*- Consultation Participant, 2009*

*(In an AO agency) the service and program delivery would come from the community and value what the community has to offer. [The] agencies [would] buy into this no matter what it looked like, and the leadership would support this.*

*- Consultation Participant, 2009*

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Institutional/Systemic</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide opportunities and support for marginalized communities to be involved in agency policy development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The agency develops methods to involve the community in agency policy development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The community would be involved in agency policy development</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In consultations involving the community, staff shifts from “power over” to “power with” approach (Dumbrill, 2009)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is an expectation of the agency that in community consultations, agency representatives demonstrate a “power with” approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Agencies must demonstrate how they demonstrate a “power with” approach as a service standard</li> </ul>

## **Appendix E: Terms of Reference for the Ontario Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable**

**October 2009**

### **Ontario Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable**

#### **Terms of Reference**

##### **Purpose:**

The Anti-Oppression (AO) Roundtable was formed in 2007 as an offshoot of the CAS Inter-Agency Training Group. The importance of this work demanded that a fully functioning roundtable be formed that would focus on trying to understand how oppression impacts our work in child welfare and how we can engage in a cycle of anti-oppression reforms. The activities of this group are committed to ensuring that our work will provide benefits to our workplace environment and improve services to children and families.

##### **Principles:**

- To affirm and support anti oppression work in the field of child welfare
- To foster an increased awareness and understanding about issues of oppression and cultural diversity and engage in informed dialogue
- To provide a learning environment so that we are able to better support and collaborate with all agencies in Child Welfare addressing AO
- To identify challenges and to develop strategies in implementing and practicing from an AO framework
- To advocate for an examination of agency's internal strategic plans, policies and practices to reflect an inclusive and anti-oppressive mandate
- To reach out to diverse communities and mutually agree on areas of engagement
- To act as allies to marginalized groups when barriers to equitable practices are identified.
- To promote an environment of accountability with regards to anti-oppression work in child welfare
- To commit to self-reflection, self-evaluation

##### **Roles and Functions:**

- To provide support to individuals who are engaged in the promotion of AO work
- To provide a forum for discussion for AO and act as a resource to agencies in linking this to strategic plans, agency policies and practices, training, and workplace culture
- To promote advocacy initiatives to identify and challenge existing AO practices and to promote dialogue for resolution
- To promote training in AO and identify training needs provincially
- To share knowledge and resources related to AO to assist with internal evaluations, goal setting
- To establish an ongoing review of the committee process
- To develop an annual work plan to determine the vision and long term strategy that will further the work in AOP which will be reviewed on an annual basis

### **Membership:**

Membership is open to all agencies providing Child Protection Services in Ontario and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. Members will have an interest and desire to promote AO work and representation from all levels of agency roles is suggested (Directors of Service, front line workers, training) to ensure inclusion. Agencies should identify one primary member to represent their agency. Agencies that are interested in involvement in the AO Roundtable, but cannot attend on a regular basis due to issues of distance or agency finances, can be added to the mailing list to receive the agendas and minutes. If additional information is needed to provide context from the meetings, mailing list participants can contact the chairpersons to provide further information.

### **Chairs of the Roundtable:**

The Roundtable is a co-chairperson model with a rotation of one person every two years to ensure continuity. Members will self-identify interest in the chair or through nomination. A date for rotation of the chair will be established annually. The co-chair persons will act as the official liaison with the Executive Director's group.

Role of the Chair is:

- To request agenda items from the membership, prepare and distribute agendas
- To establish priorities for discussion at each meeting
- To move the group through the agenda
- To act as the standing contact person to represent the group and to be a contact for questions
- To formalize the work plan
- To prepare annual status reports
- To designate minute takers and to ensure distribution of minutes following meetings

### **Meeting Structure/ Frequency:**

The frequency of meetings will be every two months and more frequently as identified by the work plan. Minutes will be taken at each meeting. Minutes will only be shared in part or full once they have been approved by the Committee.

**Reporting / Accountability:**

Official reporting of the activities of this committee will be reported back to the Executive Directors through the designated representative from the Local Directors Section. In consultation with this representative and the membership, other key groups (for example Directors of Service, Human Resources Managers) that should receive information about the committee will be determined.

**Communication:**

The Co-chairs are identified as the primary spokespersons for the group and will consult with the membership on reporting activities of the group. Agency representatives will report back to their own agencies any information/ discussions that are important to their own agency.

**Terms of Reference:**

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed annually in conjunction with an annual work plan.

**For further information, contact:**

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