

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS OF THE
CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN PARK DISTRICT
POLICY STATEMENT**

SUBJECT: Dignity and Respect for All ~~Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility~~ Policy

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 18, 202~~5~~0

I. PURPOSE

The Board of Park Commissioners of the Cleveland Metropolitan Park District is committed to fostering, cultivating and preserving a culture of ~~inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility~~ Dignity and Respect for All.

People are one of the most valuable assets we have. The collective sum of the individual differences, life experiences, knowledge, inventiveness, innovation, self-expression, unique capabilities and talent that our employees invest in their work and that our guests bring to our Park District represent a significant part of not only our culture, but our reputation and the Park District's achievements as well.

We embrace and encourage our employees' and guests' differences in age, color, disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, pregnancy, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and veteran or military status.

All Cleveland Metroparks' employees and volunteers have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect – a Core Value - at all times.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Dignity and Respect: We believe that dignity and respect are the foundations for the way we conduct all our personal and organizational business. Fairness, sincerity and compassion are integral to this value.
- B. Guest Focus: We recognize that we exist to serve our customers and that each interaction with a visitor or member of the public is an opportunity to deliver on the promises of our mission. Because of this, we will always place the customer and their experience first.
- ~~— Inclusion: Inclusion is the deliberate and purposeful act of removing barriers and amplifying voices, specifically those in marginalized communities, so that everyone can fully contribute to Cleveland Metroparks' success.~~
- B. ~~— Diversity: Diversity represents the differences and similarities, seen and unseen, between us including our characteristics, values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, preferences, and behaviors based upon which we experience systemic advantages and barriers.~~
- C. Accessibility: Accessibility is the degree to which as many people as possible can access and benefit from Cleveland Metroparks.

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~~D. **Equity:** Equity means allocating resources by evaluating burdens, benefits, and outcomes to underserved communities to ensure everyone has equal access to the same opportunities.~~

III. POLICY

A. Focus Areas and Best Practices: -Cleveland Metroparks staff shall execute the following best practices to advance dignity and respect ~~inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility~~ in the following areas:

1. ~~Compliance with Federal, State and Local Rules, Regulations, and Statutes~~

- ~~a. Cleveland Metroparks shall operate its programs, services, activities and employment practices without regard to age, color, disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, pregnancy, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and veteran or military status, in accordance with the following:~~
- ~~i. Title VI & VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;~~
 - ~~ii. The Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, as amended (42 U.S.C. §3789d);~~
 - ~~iii. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended (20 U.S.C. §1681, et seq.);~~
 - ~~iv. Section 13 of the 1972 Amendments to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act;~~
 - ~~v. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;~~
 - ~~vi. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990;~~
 - ~~vii. The Age Discrimination Act of 1975;~~
 - ~~viii. Executive Order 13166;~~
 - ~~ix. Executive Order 13279;~~
 - ~~x. Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4112; and~~
 - ~~xi. All regulations implementing the above-cited statutes.~~

2. **Conformance with Cleveland Metroparks Core Goals:** while the Park District endeavors to advance a culture of ~~inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility~~ dignity and respect for all people, the focus areas and best practices inspired by this policy statement shall contribute to Cleveland Metroparks' purpose-driven actions. The Mission and six Core Goals, the guiding tenets of 2022's Cleveland Metroparks Second Century of Stewardship System Plan, will provide a stable framework for the consideration and implementation of best practices in both workplace and community ~~inclusion, diversity, equity and~~ efforts centered on Guest Focus and ~~accessibility~~. Actionable items and new initiatives will contribute to one of the following Core Goals while promoting the Mission:

a. **Conserve:** conserve land, wildlife and water to protect the beauty, ecological function and resilience of our region and the world.

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b. **Connect:** connect people to nature and each other to build community and inspire positive action.

c. **Welcome:** welcome all people to explore the parks and zoo and prioritize inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility.

d. **Engage:** -engage and serve people with high quality facilities, compelling zoological experiences, volunteer and recreational opportunities and captivating programs and events.

e. **Sustain:** sustain and uplift our region, our parks, our people and our infrastructure for future generations.

f. **Innovate:** innovate by exploring new solutions to expand the health and well-being of our region and the world.

2. ~~Recruitment~~

~~a. By Department, identify or create pipelines or networks to recruit diverse and talented employee and volunteer candidate pools.~~

~~i. Advertise on diversity focused career websites/social media.~~

~~ii. Network with internal and external diversity groups within professional associations or other targeted audiences relevant to the position.~~

~~b. Include diverse employees or members who are knowledgeable about diverse populations Cleveland Metroparks wants to attract or advance in interview panels.~~

~~c. Human Resources shall track candidate pool to identify if/where underrepresented groups are falling out of the hiring process~~

~~d. Employees are rewarded with a bonus if they refer a diverse employment candidate who is hired.~~

~~e. Develop strategies to place members of underrepresented groups in positions that serve as succession pools for future promotion.~~

~~f. Insights of diverse groups are sought and welcomed in critical areas of programs and operations.~~

~~g. Employees are not alienated or excluded because they don't fit into a set of cultural norms.~~

~~h. Human Resources will monitor the following:~~

~~i. Review job postings to ensure all criteria are needed/relevant and that the job description does not use "gendered" descriptive terms.~~

~~ii. Reviews performance evaluations to identify trends/biases in how evaluations are written/presented for different groups.~~

~~iii. Turnover of members of underrepresented groups to ensure parity with that of the majority group~~

~~iv. That the workforce across all levels and functions is generally representative of the labor market in Northeast Ohio.~~

~~v. Compensation gap analysis to ensure the absence of bias in the areas of age, disability, gender, or race.~~

3. ~~Benefits, Work-Life Integration and Flexibility~~

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- ~~a. Part time, job sharing, and flexible work arrangements are available. Their use does not negatively impact employee performance or advancement.~~
 - ~~b. Parental leave and maternity leave policies are reviewed to promote work/life balance while understanding the public sector framework of leave accrual.~~
 - ~~c. Accessibility and accommodation for religious practices, persons with disabilities, and other special needs are accepted and do not negatively impact the perception of performance.~~
 - ~~d. Cleveland Metroparks accepts and recognizes diversity in language and accents, dress, religion, physical appearance, and non-traditional schedules as fully legitimate.~~
 - ~~e. An inclusive concept of family guides determination of benefits and participation in organizational events.~~

4. Outreach that ensures the engagement of underrepresented audiences including but not limited to English language learners and community constituencies

- ~~a. Community Engagement: Partner with community organizations and community members during park and program planning.~~
- ~~b. Assess: Understand community priorities based on data and community input. Conduct a community-wide survey to gather input and data from community members on resident perceived gaps, barriers and assets to park access.~~
- ~~b. Planning and Partner Coalition: Work with the coalition and individual partners to analyze data, conduct audits, collect community surveys and lead community meetings/event.~~
- ~~c. Plan: Develop priority areas, set goals and specific actions, identify policy improvements, and integrate into agency and jurisdiction plans and policies.~~
- ~~d. Programming: Support and design programs at the park (including those run by other organizations) to encourage residents to walk or bike to the park and engage in physical activity at the park. Promote and design programs (including those run by other organizations) that are tailored to the needs of the community and reach under represented or high need populations or groups.~~

5. Leadership, Measurement and Accountability

- ~~a. Diversity is recognized as a business interest, with every level of the organization holding responsibility.~~
- ~~b. Person responsible for overseeing or leading diversity and inclusion efforts shall serve on the senior leadership team (Chief/Director).~~
- ~~c. Adequate financial resources in the form of a diversity and inclusion budget and support shall be provided to ensure successful implementation of diversity and inclusion strategy.~~
- ~~d. Members of the Chief staff and other supervisory staff shall:~~
 - ~~i. Attend diversity and inclusion programs/and/or conferences outside Cleveland Metroparks.~~
 - ~~ii. Speak internally about diversity and inclusion efforts.~~
 - ~~iii. Speak externally about diversity and inclusion efforts.~~
 - ~~iv. Belong to organizations or committees focusing on diversity and inclusion within their respective industry.~~
 - ~~v. Have performance or pay tied to specific diversity and inclusion goals.~~
- ~~e. Measurement tools shall be used to track progress on recruitment, retention, compensation and other diversity and inclusion elements.~~
- ~~f. Cleveland Metroparks commits to increasing diversity at the Board and senior leadership levels~~

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~~6. Communication, Training, and Development~~

- ~~a. Communication shall be respectful between all employees regardless of title or level and shall reflect awareness and knowledge of diversity, including recognition of cultural influences, to enhance inclusion.~~
- ~~b. Cleveland Metroparks's external website shall feature information about its diversity and inclusion vision and strategy and be easily and quickly located on the internal and external websites.~~
- ~~c. Cleveland Metroparks' communication functions (PR, employee communication, marketing) consistently promote diversity and inclusion.~~
- ~~d. Diversity and inclusion shall be integrated into Cleveland Metroparks' learning and education programs, including employee orientation, customer service, and management programs to advances Cleveland Metroparks' strategy.~~
- ~~e. Employee training on cultural competencies, privilege, unconscious bias, etc. shall be required for all managers and all employees who participate in recruiting, hiring, procurement processes and/or training of new employees.~~
- ~~f. All employees are trained on inclusion and diversity, and diversity which is an on going, multi year curriculum that takes employees through graduated stages of learning.~~
- ~~g. Members of underrepresented groups for committees and leadership positions, promotions, project assignments, career advancement, succession pools shall be meaningfully considered.~~
- ~~h. Formal mentoring programs exist.~~

~~7. Procurement and Supplier Diversity~~

- ~~a. Diversity and inclusion criteria is included in all applicable procurement processes and given reference or weight in the decision making process.~~
- ~~b. Cleveland Metroparks shall be proactive in seeking and attracting underrepresented suppliers and informing new and established suppliers additional opportunities with Cleveland Metroparks.~~
- ~~c. Persons involved in the supplier selection process shall be knowledgeable about diversity and inclusion and aware of the potential impact of unconscious bias.~~

III. PROCEDURES

- A. **~~IDEA-Community Engagement Team~~**: Cleveland Metroparks Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in consultation with Department Chiefs, shall appoint at least one Department employee to serve on the Cleveland Metroparks ~~Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Team (IDEA Team)Community Engagement Team (CET)~~.
 1. The ~~IDEA-Community Engagement~~ Team shall meet regularly to oversee the implementation of this Policy and make recommendations that support Dignity and Respect to the CEO.
 2. Each ~~IDEA-Community Engagement~~ Team member shall serve as the departmental liaison, will be known as a "~~IDEA-CET~~ Coordinator", and will be the point of contact and clearinghouse for all ~~IDEA-Community Engagement~~ related issues related to this Policy for that department.

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~~a.~~ The departmental ~~IDEA-CET~~ Coordinator along with the Department Chief shall communicate and monitor applications of best practices, ~~enumerated above~~, within that department.

~~3. A Diversity~~ An Outreach Steering Council, comprised of Department Chiefs/Directors and other Human Resources professionals, will guide the ~~IDEACET~~ Team in the selection and prioritization of ~~IDEACET-related~~ initiatives. The Council will provide expertise, along with direction, training, resources and funding to support the ~~IDEA~~ Community Engagement Team's efforts to further the mission and align with the Core Goals of Cleveland Metroparks.

B. Compliance with Policy:

~~B.~~

~~1.~~ All commissioners, employees, officers, volunteers, affiliates, vendors, contractors, and any individual or entity acting on behalf of Cleveland Metroparks shall comply with this Policy.

~~2.~~ The success of Cleveland Metroparks' ~~IDEA Dignity and Respect~~ efforts depends ~~upon on~~ the appropriate dedication of resources and the efforts and compliance of all commissioners, employees, officers, volunteers, affiliates, vendors, contractors, and any individual or entity acting on behalf of Cleveland Metroparks.

~~3.~~ The CEO, or their designee, shall ensure that the required notices related to this policy are properly posted.

~~a.~~ Notice Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act Discrimination (non-disability):
Cleveland Metroparks operates its programs, services, and activities without regard to race, color, religion, age, national origin, national ancestry, sex, pregnancy, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, military service or veteran status, mental or physical disability, or genetic information, in accordance with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the 1972 Amendments to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the age Discrimination Act, and Executive Order 13166.

C. Notices:

~~1.~~ The CEO, or his designee, shall ensure that the required notices related to this policy are properly posted.

~~a.~~ Notice Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act Discrimination (non-disability):
Cleveland Metroparks operates its programs, services, and activities without regard to race, color, religion, age, national origin, national ancestry, sex, pregnancy, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, military service or veteran status, mental or physical disability, or genetic

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~~information, in accordance with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the 1972 Amendments to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the age Discrimination Act, and Executive Order 13166.~~

~~b. Notice Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (disability)~~

~~*i. **Effective Communication:** Cleveland Metroparks will generally, upon request, provide appropriate aids and services leading to effective communication for qualified persons with disabilities so they can participate equally in Cleveland Metroparks' programs, services, and activities, including qualified sign language interpreters, documents in Braille, and other ways of making information and communications accessible to people who have speech, hearing, or vision impairments. Anyone who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication, or a modification of policies or procedures to participate in a program, service, or activity of Cleveland Metroparks, should contact the office of Director of Risk Management (glh@clevelandmetroparks.com 216.635.3200) as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours before the scheduled event.*~~

~~*ii. **Modifications to Policies and Procedures:** Cleveland Metroparks will make all reasonable modifications to policies and programs to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy all of its programs, services, and activities. For example, individuals with service animals are welcomed in Cleveland Metroparks offices, even where pets are generally prohibited.*~~

~~*(a) **Alteration or burden:** The ADA does not require Cleveland Metroparks to take any action that would fundamentally alter the nature of its programs or services, or impose an undue financial or administrative burden.*~~

~~*(b) **No surcharge:** Cleveland Metroparks will not place a surcharge on a particular individual with a disability or any group of individuals with disabilities to cover the cost of providing auxiliary aids/services or reasonable modifications of policy, such as retrieving items from locations that are open to the public but are not accessible to persons who use wheelchairs.*~~

~~D4. Complaints:~~

~~1. Complaints under this Policy related to Title VI Discrimination (~~non-disability~~) matters other than employment should be directed to the Chief Legal & Ethics Officer at rmf1@clevelandmetroparks.com or 216.635.3200. ~~Employment-related~~Employment-related complaints shall follow the processes prescribed in the Cleveland Metroparks Employee Handbook.~~

~~2. Complaints under this Policy related to ADA (disability) matters other than employment should be directed to the Director of Risk Management at~~

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~~glh@clevelandmetroparks.com or 216.635.3200. Employment related complaints shall follow the processes proscribed in the Cleveland Metroparks Employee Handbook.~~

~~E-5. Retaliation:~~ Cleveland Metroparks also prohibits retaliation based on a protected activity~~iesy~~, such as the filing of a complaint of discrimination, participation in the investigation of such a claim, or reporting activity that is believed by the employee to be a violation of law or ethics or a waste of public funds. Any witness, complainant or respondent involved in an investigation or involved in reporting suspected unlawful or unethical activity shall not to be retaliated against for their participation in the reporting or fact-finding processes.

References:

- Title VI & VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; The Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, as amended (42 U.S.C. §3789d);
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended (20 U.S.C. §1681, et seq.);
- Section 13 of the 1972 Amendments to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act;
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;
- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990;
- The Age Discrimination Act of 1975; ~~and~~
- ~~Executive Order 13166~~
- ~~Executive Order 13279~~
- Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4112;
- ~~Global Diversity & Inclusion Benchmarks: Standards for Organizations Around the World.~~
- ~~Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index~~
- ~~Greater Cleveland Partnership Commission on Economic Inclusion~~
- [Executive Order 14151](#);
- [Executive Order 14168](#);
- [Executive Order 14173](#)

Replaces and Supersedes: Dignity & Respect ~~For for All Policy: Nondiscrimination Policy,~~ ~~November 12, 2015~~September 17, 2020

Approved:

Chief Executive Officer-Secretary

Board President

Approval Date

Review Date

ACTION ITEMS (cont.)

and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Secretary of this Board be and is hereby directed to certify a copy of this Resolution to the County Fiscal Officer of said County.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the Board of Park Commissioners approve the resolution above.

- (c) ***Adoption of Revised Policy – Dignity and Respect for All Policy***
(Originating Sources: Brian M. Zimmerman, Chief Executive Officer/Rosalina M. Fini, Chief Legal and Ethics Officer/Harold Harrison, Chief Human Resources Officer/Dan Veloski, Human Resources Manager)

Pursuant to Article 1, Section 1(a) of its By-Laws, the Board of Park Commissioners held the first reading of the substantially revised “Dignity and Respect for All Policy” on August 21, 2025.

The purpose of this Policy is the following:

“The Board of Park Commissioners of the Cleveland Metropolitan Park District is committed to fostering, cultivating and preserving a culture of Dignity and Respect for All.

People are one of the most valuable assets we have. The collective sum of the individual differences, life experiences, knowledge, inventiveness, innovation, self-expression, unique capabilities and talent that our employees invest in their work and that our guests bring to our Park District represent a significant part of not only our culture, but our reputation and the Park District’s achievements as well.

We embrace and encourage our employees’ and guests’ differences in age, color, disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, pregnancy, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and veteran or military status.

All Cleveland Metroparks’ employees and volunteers have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect – a Core Value – at all times.”

The “Dignity and Respect for All Policy” has been modified to conform to changes in federal policy ensuring eligibility for federal funding, while maintaining our fidelity to the Park District’s core values.

No additional changes have been made since the first reading on August 21, 2025.