



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, FAIRNESS, AND BELONGING POLICY



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POLICY STATEMENT

Effective Date: April 1, 2020

Last Revised: April 1, 2026

Next Review Date: April 1, 2027

Katy Cares, Inc. is committed to creating an environment where every individual — regardless of their background, identity, or circumstance — is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. This policy affirms our commitment to equal opportunity, merit-based decision-making, and a culture of belonging in which all individuals feel welcomed, valued, and empowered to contribute fully to our shared mission.

These principles are not political positions — they are organizational values rooted in our calling to serve every family that comes to us with the same excellence, care, and respect. This policy reflects both our legal obligations and the character of our organization.

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1. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Katy Cares employees, volunteers, board members, contractors, program participants, and anyone acting on behalf of the organization — across all physical, virtual, and community settings in which Katy Cares conducts its work.

2. DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used throughout this policy:

Fairness

The consistent and impartial application of standards, opportunities, and expectations to all individuals, based on merit, qualifications, and organizational need — without preference, prejudice, or bias.

Equal Opportunity

Ensuring that all individuals have access to the same opportunities in employment, program participation, professional development, and organizational engagement, regardless of personal characteristics unrelated to performance or qualifications.

Belonging

Creating an environment in which every person feels genuinely welcomed, respected, and valued — where individual differences are acknowledged with dignity and where all people can engage authentically and contribute meaningfully.

Cultural Competence

The ability to understand, respect, and work effectively with people from a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives — a skill essential to serving the diverse families of Fort Bend County with excellence.

Merit-Based Decision-Making

The practice of making all organizational decisions — including hiring, promotion, program participation, and resource allocation — based on an individual's qualifications, skills, performance, and organizational fit, rather than on personal characteristics unrelated to the matter at hand.

3. OUR COMMITMENTS

3.1 Workplace Culture

Katy Cares is committed to fostering a professional culture grounded in mutual respect, personal dignity, and fair treatment for all. We cultivate an environment where excellence is expected,



differences are respected, and every person is treated as a valued contributor to our shared mission.

3.2 Recruitment and Hiring

All recruitment and hiring decisions are made based on merit, qualifications, skills, and organizational fit. We are committed to fair and transparent hiring practices that provide equal opportunity to all candidates and eliminate bias from our selection processes.

3.3 Professional Development

Katy Cares is committed to providing equitable access to professional development, training, and advancement opportunities for all staff members. Career growth is supported based on performance, merit, and organizational need.

3.4 Equal Opportunity Employment

All employment decisions — including compensation, promotion, transfer, training, and termination — are made solely based on merit, qualifications, and performance. No employment decision will be made on the basis of personal characteristics unrelated to an individual's ability to perform their role effectively.

3.5 A Safe and Respectful Environment

Katy Cares maintains a workplace and program environment where every person — staff, volunteers, board members, or program participants — is treated with dignity and respect. Harassment, discrimination, intimidation, and retaliation are strictly prohibited and are addressed through our Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.

3.6 Serving Our Community with Cultural Competence

The families we serve represent a wide range of cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and personal circumstances. We are committed to delivering our programs and services with cultural competence, trauma-informed sensitivity, and genuine respect for the whole person — ensuring that every family who comes to Katy Cares receives the same quality of care, regardless of who they are or where they come from.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Leadership

Organizational leadership is responsible for modeling the values of fairness, respect, and equal opportunity in all decision-making and daily operations. Leaders are accountable for ensuring that this policy is implemented consistently and that any violations are addressed promptly and appropriately.



4.2 Employees and Staff

All employees are expected to treat colleagues, volunteers, program participants, and community members with dignity and respect, to support a professional and welcoming workplace culture, and to report any concerns regarding discrimination, harassment, or bias through established reporting channels.

4.3 Volunteers

All volunteers are oriented to the values and expectations of this policy and are expected to engage with program participants, staff, and community members with professionalism, respect, and cultural sensitivity at all times.

4.4 Board Members

Board members are responsible for providing governance oversight to ensure this policy is embedded in the organization's culture and operations. Board members are expected to model the highest standards of fairness, respect, and professional conduct in all their interactions on behalf of Katy Cares.

5. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Katy Cares provides ongoing training to ensure that all staff and volunteers are equipped to uphold the values of this policy. Training is provided during orientation and on an ongoing basis as appropriate, and covers the following areas:

- Cultural competence and sensitivity in serving diverse communities
- Unconscious bias awareness and fair decision-making practices
- Trauma-informed communication and program delivery
- Professional standards of conduct and respectful workplace behavior
- Reporting procedures for concerns related to discrimination or harassment
- Organizational policies and legal compliance requirements

6. ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Katy Cares establishes clear organizational goals for fair and equitable operations and regularly evaluates the effectiveness of our practices in achieving them. Specifically, the organization commits to the following:

- Establishing measurable goals related to fair hiring, program access, and professional development
- Conducting regular assessments of organizational practices to identify and address unintended barriers



- Reviewing and updating policies annually to reflect legal requirements and organizational learning
 - Maintaining open channels for staff, volunteers, and program participants to provide feedback
 - Ensuring that feedback and concerns are addressed promptly, fairly, and without retaliation
 - Reporting on organizational progress to the Board of Directors regularly
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7. REPORTING CONCERNS

Any individual who believes this policy has been violated, or who has concerns regarding fairness, equal opportunity, or respectful conduct within the organization, is encouraged to report those concerns promptly through any of the following channels:

- Chairman of the Board of Directors — [Contact Information]
- President / Executive Director — [Contact Information]
- Any Board Member or Supervisor

All reports will be handled with discretion and confidentiality to the extent possible. Katy Cares strictly prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports a concern in good faith, participates in an investigation, or opposes conduct that violates this policy. Retaliation is itself a serious policy violation subject to disciplinary action.

8. POLICY AND REVIEW UPDATES

This policy will be reviewed annually by organizational leadership and the Board of Directors, and updated as necessary to reflect changes in applicable federal, state, and local law, evolving best practices, and organizational experience. All updates will be communicated promptly to staff, volunteers, and board members.

9. LEGAL COMPLIANCE

This policy is designed to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, including but not limited to the following:

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
 - Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA)
 - Pregnancy Discrimination Act
 - Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act (GINA)
 - Texas Labor Code Chapter 21 — Texas Commission on Human Rights Act
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- Fair Housing Act (applicable to residential and transitional housing programs)
- Equal Credit Opportunity Act
- All other applicable federal, state, and local anti-discrimination laws

Nothing in this policy limits any rights or remedies available under applicable law. Individuals retain the right to file complaints with external agencies, including the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the Texas Workforce Commission Civil Rights Division, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and any other applicable federal, state, or local agencies.

11. POLICY ADOPTION

This policy was adopted by the Board of Directors of Katy Cares, Inc. on the date indicated below.

Chairman: Board of Directors

Dr. Jerry Edmonson

President: Executive Director

Dr. Dawid J Pieterse

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Katy Cares, Inc. is committed to operating with integrity, transparency, and accountability. This policy reflects our conviction that speaking up is an act of courage — and that those who do deserve our full protection and sincere gratitude.