

NWLS Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Statement

Northwestern Legal Services (“NWLS”) is a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace where all employees and volunteers, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or identity, education, disability, socioeconomic status, or position, feels valued and respected. We are committed to a nondiscriminatory approach and provide equal opportunity for employment and advancement in all of our offices and departments. We respect and value diverse life experiences and heritages and ensure that all voices are valued and heard.

We are committed to modeling diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (“DEIB”) for the entire legal services and nonprofit communities and to maintaining an inclusive environment with equitable treatment for all.

To provide informed, authentic leadership for cultural equity, NWLS strives to:

- See DEIB as connected to our mission and critical to ensuring the well-being of our staff, board, volunteers, interns, and the low-income communities we serve.
- Acknowledge and dismantle any inequities within our policies, systems, programs, and services, and to continually update and report organization progress.
- Explore potential underlying, unquestioned assumptions that interfere with inclusiveness.
- Advocate for and support board-level thinking about how systemic inequities impact our organization’s work, and how best to address that in a way that is consistent with our mission.
- Challenge assumptions about what it takes to be a strong leader at our organization, and who is well-positioned to provide leadership.
- Practice and encourage transparent communication in all interactions.
- Commit time and resources to expand more diverse leadership within our board and staff, and advisory bodies.
- Lead with respect and tolerance. We expect all employees to embrace this notion and to express it in workplace interactions and through everyday practices.

NWLS will abide by the following action items to help promote DEIB in our workplace by:

- Pursuing cultural competency throughout our organization by the creation of substantive learning and training opportunities and formal, transparent policies.
- Generating and aggregating quantitative and qualitative research related to equity to make incremental, measurable progress toward the visibility of our DEIB efforts. Once the content is curated it will be added to our website so others can access it.
- Improving our cultural leadership pipeline by creating and supporting programs and policies which foster leadership that reflects the diversity of American society.
- Pooling resources and expanding offerings for our clients by connecting with other community organizations and businesses committed to DEIB efforts.
- Developing and presenting sessions on DEIB to provide information and resources internally and to members of our client community.
- Developing a system for being more intentional and conscious of bias during the hiring, promoting, or evaluating processes, and training our hiring team on equitable practices.
- Including a salary range with all public job descriptions.
- Challenging systems and policies that perpetuate inequity, oppression, and disparity within our organization and for the clients that we serve.