

## **OUTreach Southern Alberta Society**

### **SUPPORT GROUP POLICY**

**OUTreach Southern Alberta Society** is a not-for profit organization that responds to the needs of the local and the broader lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirit, and queer (LGBTQT) community of Lethbridge and the surrounding area by supplying resources, education and opportunities to foster self-determination, civic engagement and community participation. OUTreach believes that strong policies create good governance and leadership in service to Southern Alberta.

**POLICY STATEMENT:** OUTreach Support Groups are peer-led, grassroots social networks that seek primarily to combat the loneliness and isolation often felt by LGBTQT individuals and those journeying with them.

#### **1. DEFINITIONS**

1.1 “Board” means the Board of Directors, as stated in Sec 7 of the Bylaws.

1.2 “Director” means an individual member elected to the Board of Directors, as stated in Sec 7.1(a) of the Bylaws.

1.3 “Executive” means the Officers of the Board of Directors, as stated in Sec 11 of the Bylaws.

1.4 “Facilitator” means the individual who leads the Support Group meetings.

1.5 “Group” means the individuals who collectively attend a Program meeting.

1.6 “In writing” means any written correspondence, including e-mail.

1.7 “Participant” means an attendee of a Group meeting.

1.8 “President” means the individual elected to the Office of President, as stated in Sec 12.1 of the Bylaws.

1.9 “Program” means any or all meetings of the Support Group.

#### **2. COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS**

2.1 Directors will conduct OUTreach’s business in accordance with applicable legislation, including: *Alberta Societies Act, Employment Standards Code of Alberta, Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Alberta Human Rights, Criminal Code of Canada* and all other applicable legislation.

#### **3. FACILITATOR**

3.1 The Board will designate a Program facilitator.

3.2 Every designated Program facilitator must provide the President with a completed *Criminal Record Check* and a *Vulnerable Sector Check* before facilitating a Program.

3.2.1 Every designated Program facilitator must provide the President annually with a completed *Criminal Record Check* and a *Vulnerable Sector Check*.

- 3.2.2 The President shall keep all *Criminal Record* and *Vulnerable Sector Check* reports.
- 3.2.3 The President must shred every *Criminal Record* and *Vulnerable Sector Check* report within 30 days of either receipt of a new *Check* or the individual no longer facilitates.
- 3.3 The facilitator will:
- a) ensure that discussions remain on topic to ensure a productive use of time.
  - b) help guide the meeting, as group members solve issues when possible.
- 3.4 The facilitator will not:
- a) provide solutions to member issues.
  - b) engage in romantic or sexual relationships with group members.
- 3.5 Facilitators maintain the right to require an individual or individuals to leave, or to suspend the person(s), from attending group meetings and/or the location during meeting times, in order to protect the safety, confidentiality, and/or productivity of the group and its' members.
- 3.5.1 If any issues or concerns arise (such as, but not limited to, those identified in 3.4) the facilitator will advise the Executive of the issue or concern, in writing, immediately following the meeting.
- 3.6 The facilitator must, from time to time, read the principles of Group participation at the start of the meeting.

#### 4. GROUP and PARTICIPANTS

4.1 At all times, the Group and all participants shall adhere to the following principles:

- a) **Confidentiality** in that everything shared in the group is confidential and is not to leave the room. Individuals are responsible for any conversations held with other group members outside of the designated group.
- b) **Respect** in that participants must show respect for individuals, their choices, pronouns, names, and expressions.
- c) **Not Provide Unsolicited Advice** in that **this group is to share emotions and experiences, not unsolicited advice.**
- d) **Focus on Inclusion** in that all members share the responsibility to make the group work.
- e) **Keep Discussions on Topic** in that members should be mindful of limited time and give each person time to speak without interruptions and avoid side conversations.
- f) **Share** in that sharing is encouraged, but not required.
- g) **Ask Questions** in that group members have the right to ask questions and the right to refuse to answer.
- h) **Substance Free** – meetings are drug and alcohol free.
- i) **Duty to Report** – if group members disclose an intent of imminent harm to themselves or others, facilitators are legally obligated to contact relevant authorities. Facilitators will also provide contacts for other crisis supports.

4.2 Breaches of these principles are not tolerated, whether it is a participant, the Group, the facilitator or anyone else present at the meeting.

4.3 Any breach of a principle to the discomfort of the facilitator or any other participant is to be reported immediately, in writing, to the Board.

4.4 The Executive will handle breaches of principles in any manner deemed appropriate and / or necessary.

## **5. MEETINGS**

5.1 Meetings are open to individuals 18 years of age and older.

5.2 The facilitator may ask for age identification if in doubt of an attendee's age, for the purpose of assuring age compliance under 5.1.

5.3 Any request for age identification must be reported to the Board, in writing, immediately following the meeting.

## **6. BOARD RESPONSIBILITY**

6.1 The Board is responsible for the existence, purpose, outcomes and objectives of the Program.

6.2 The Board will annually review the success and viability of the Program.

6.3 The Board will designate a Program facilitator.

6.4 The Board may designate more than one Program facilitator.

6.5 The Executive will handle breaches of this policy in any manner deemed appropriate and / or necessary.

**ATTACHMENT:** Appendix A (List of current OUTreach Support Groups)

Appendix A  
List of Current Support Groups

Trans Support Group:  
Commenced - Jan 2016  
Facilitators - Thomas Spence, Dillon Hargreaves

Queer Parent Group:  
Commenced - March 2016  
Facilitators - Tiff Gross

Parent of LGBTQ Kids:  
Commenced - June 2016  
Facilitators - Tiff Gross, Jennifer Davis