

Equity Walk-Through

This exercise will help staff ‘walk through’ the *physical and social spaces* where they provide care or services to clients. It will prompt staff to consider the extent to which these environments are likely to feel welcoming, culturally and emotionally safe, and reduce harm for everyone, but especially for those who are most likely to feel unwelcome and unsafe. The space can be *anywhere* you provide care or services to clients (e.g., in an office, a clinic, a community center, a home setting, an acute care or a hospital setting).

In this activity, we ask you to put yourself in your clients ‘shoes’ and imagine what it might be like for them to be in this physical and social space. Be sure to think through equity from the perspective of key demographics that your organization is aiming to serve, for instance Indigenous people or LGBTQ2+ peoples. Pay particular attention to things in this environment that might create feelings of discomfort, stigma or feeling unsafe. If you find it helpful, you can think about a specific client or group of clients.

Approaching and Entering the Setting

Think about visiting the setting(s) where you work. As you approach and enter, imagine it’s your first visit:

- How easy is it to get here and to find? How much effort have you had to make to get here?
- How do you enter? Is it clear how you are supposed to enter? Is it accessible to people with varying mobility needs?
- What do you notice as you approach the building? Enter the building? What does this look and feel like?
- Who is present? Speaking? What do you observe about people? What do you notice about people’s facial expressions, their posture? What stands out for you?
- Who is communicating with who? How are people communicating? What is their tone of voice?
- Are people making eye contact? And if so, who is making eye contact with whom?



Think about it

- What is welcoming or unwelcoming as you enter?
- What tone does the signage convey? Who do you imagine decides the signage? What influences those decisions?
- Who would feel welcome or unwelcome here? Do you feel welcome here? Why or why not?
- What things or people in the space might deter people from engaging with who they encounter here?

First Contact with your Organization

Now imagine what the first contact is like with a staff member:

- Is there a reception area? Where is it located? How do you know where it is and how you are supposed to go there? If contact is made by phone, is the telephone system easy to use? How often is the line busy? Are there other physical barrier between you and the staff member (eg. glass wall)?
- How are you greeted and by whom? Do you know the role of the staff member who greets you?
- What messages do staff convey? Consider usual facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, words.



- What makes you feel comfortable or uncomfortable in this first contact? Who would feel most comfortable? Are different people treated differently and if so in what way and by whom? Based on what?
- What questions are you asked and in what order? [Imagine the questions on your intake form if there is one]. What does it draw attention to? From what does it detract attention?

Think about it

- When staff engage with clients, do you think that they consider what is affecting people's health? For example, do you think that staff account for how hard it might be to even get to or call?
- How do staff engage with people who do not speak English as a first language? Does anything about their communication change?
- Do the staff take into consideration patient age or physical ability? For example, how do they speak with elderly patients? Are patients able to sit at reception or are they standing? Are they often put 'on hold'?
- How do staff engage with people who seem to have trouble focusing on questions being asked?

Waiting area (if applicable)

- If you had to describe the space to someone in two words, what would you say?
- What is the strongest feeling you have as you enter the waiting area?
- What does it look like? What is there for people to occupy waiting time?
- Are snacks, water and washrooms available and accessible? Are the waiting areas and washrooms clean?
- What kinds of chairs are available for people? Do they seem comfortable?
- What do you notice about the other clients waiting here? Do they seem comfortable to you? Are they talking to one another?
- Notice who is helping people in the waiting area. Who is talking to clients? Who is helping if someone appears distressed or uncomfortable? Do some people seem uncomfortable? Why?
- What do you see that is relevant to people's privacy, their identity and/or their health issue(s)?



Think about it

- Who would feel comfortable in this space? Who wouldn't? Why?
- How is privacy and confidentiality protected in this space?

Examination/Treatment Rooms/Meeting Rooms

- What is the layout of this space? How would you describe the feel? Warm, cold, cozy, sterile?
- How do you get to these rooms? Who goes with you? Who is allowed to be with you?
- Is a staff person always in the room? If so, what role is the staff person?
- Do you understand how decisions are made regarding who will be seen first? Is this based on order of arrival or some other priority rating?
- What do you notice about when and how staff talk with clients? How does the encounter begin? End?



- What happens prior to and during any assessments or therapeutic encounters (e.g. physical examination, procedure, counselling or educational session)? What are staff doing and saying? What actions do staff take to ensure your privacy and comfort?
- Would you feel comfortable in this space? What might make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe?
- How does an encounter end? Do the staff check in with you? Do they provide opportunity for questions?

Think about it

- Are the spaces set-up to best serve clients or staff?
- Who would feel respected in this space? Who would not? Why?
- What small thing could be changed to make the spaces more welcoming?

Other Considerations

- **Bathrooms**
 - Are they available, accessible, well-signed and cleaned/provisioned regularly? Is a key needed? Is there a safe space to dispose of sharps? Is there a non-gendered bathroom? A baby-changing/nursing area?
- **Forms and documentation**
 - What language/terminology is used to describe clients? What does it draw attention to? What does it overlook?
 - How does the form position you in relation to the patient? How does it shape your perspective of power/authority?
 - What do the forms guide you to say? Whose interests/concerns are prioritized?
 - What does the form tell you about the health care system?
 - Is the form available in multiple languages?
- **Charting**
 - Where does it happen? Is it designed to protect client privacy?
 - Can the clients see what is being written about them?

