



# **DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

Effective Date: November 20, 2023

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## Statement of Intent

Akal United Football Club (AUFC) is committed to creating programming that is culturally appropriate. We believe football is an important tool for integration and connection between all cultures. AUFC believes that community plays a huge part in our identity and how we see ourselves as a sports organization.

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure that everyone is treated fairly, and that AUFC is equally accessible to all. This policy applies to all members of AUFC, and requires them to abide and adhere to it, as well as the requirements of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and British Columbia's human rights legislation.

All members of AUFC should read this policy, and this policy shall be posted on the AUFC's website.

This policy is applied to both genders; personal pronouns referring to any one gender can be exchanged with those referring to the other gender without a change in meaning.

1. Soccer belongs to, and should be enjoyed by, anyone who wants to participate in it;
2. AUFC in all its activities, will not discriminate, or in any way treat anyone less favourably, on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, nationality, ethnic origin, colour, religion or belief;
3. AUFC shall promote the principals and practices of equality and inclusiveness in all aspects of its activities, and endeavour to provide fair and balanced access to resources, programming and a full range of opportunities for all members of the community.

AUFC understands that these items include not only policy but also procedure and it is very important to review these policies and procedures to improve. We are also dedicated to implementing any policy released by BC Soccer, and Canada Soccer, once it is completed. AUFC is committed to further educating our coaches and staff on how to create a welcoming, diverse environment for all to feel welcome.

## Defining the Terms

**Inclusive Environment** - an inclusive environment is one where people have both the feeling and reality of belonging, where they can participate in ways that are meaningful to them, and where the activity contributes to them reaching their full potential. It involves understanding, accepting, and respecting diversity and actively involving people from the diverse groups represented within the community. Relevant and appropriate policies and services are developed and implemented, and there is an organizational commitment to eliminating barriers.

**Equity** – equity is providing people with what they need to succeed. An equitable organization allocates resources, programs and decision-making in ways that result in similar opportunities and benefits to all participants. An equity lens recognizes that decisions need to account for unequal barriers to sport and leadership to ensure that everyone has access to the full range of opportunities to achieve the social, psychological, and physical benefits that come from participating in and leading sport and physical activity. Creating equity sometimes requires treating some people differently to ‘level the playing field’ (e.g., assisting individuals who face additional barriers to obtain equipment, training education, or other programs and services).

**Diversity** – diversity refers to the broad spectrum of demographic characteristics of members of Canadian society, including, but not limited to, sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, economic means, ability, age, religion, and education. Welcoming diversity not only acknowledges and respects differences but also recognizes the worth of every individual and their value to their communities and society at large.<sup>1</sup>

**Right to Equal Opportunity** – AUFC prohibits any treatment which has a discriminatory effect on any person based on any of the following prohibited grounds; sex, race, ethnic origin, class, age, family status, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. In addition to the rights ensured by this policy, applicants and employees have a legal right to equal opportunities at work. Discrimination is prohibited by several pieces of legislation, including the Canadian Human Rights Act and provincial human rights acts. Pregnancy Discrimination Is Sex Discrimination - where opportunities are denied to a woman because of a pregnancy or an anticipated or possible pregnancy, that woman has been discriminated against on the basis of sex. Sex discrimination is prohibited.

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<sup>1</sup> Canada Soccer – Guide to Accessibility and Inclusion

## [Athletes with a Disability](#)

Approximately 22% of Canadians have a sensory, intellectual, or physical disability (Statistics Canada, 2017), and some have more than one disability. These Canadians frequently face challenges in pursuing sport and physical activity, stemming largely from lack of access to suitable programming, facilities, coaching, and support in general.

AUFC is currently working on **establishing partnerships** with the nearby sport organizations to help athletes with disabilities to have access to organized sport programs.

### **Online Training – Coaching Athletes with a Disability**

[Coaching Athletes with a Disability is a National Coaching Certification Program \(NCCP\)](#) eLearning module that provides coaches with the knowledge to deliver quality, positive, sport experiences for athletes, specifically with behavioural, intellectual, physical, and sensory disabilities.

Coaching Athletes with a Disability NCCP training will give coaches the ability to:

- Explain the benefits of sport participation for persons with a disability;
- Communicate effectively and respectfully with, and regards to, persons with a disability;
- Design positive, safe, and inclusive sport experiences for persons with a disability; and
- Consider next steps in their professional development related to coaching persons with a disability.<sup>2</sup>

[Coaching Kids of All Abilities](#) is an online resource that helps coaches and youth activity leaders create inclusive sporting environments for kids of all abilities. Developed by JumpStart, in conjunction with Sport for Life Society, Active Living Alliance for Canadians with Disabilities, Canucks Autism Network, Défi sportif AlterGo, and the Coaching Association of Canada, this eLearning workshop includes two modules: Welcoming All Abilities and Supporting Positive Behaviours.<sup>3</sup>

## [Women in Sport](#)

AUFC is committed to supporting and promoting female coaches and athletes. One of the AUFC's biggest priorities is developing female programs. AUFC welcomes female players to join the existing technical programs and is committed to support them in learning about coaching and being involved in AUFC's soccer operations and coaching.

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<sup>2</sup> Coaching Association of Canada – Coaching Athletes with a Disability

<sup>3</sup> Jumpstart – Coaching Kids of All Abilities

## Online Training and Assessment

[Keeping Girls in Sport](#) was created to help everyone who coaches girls understand how girls develop physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally. When we understand how and why girls play, we can help every young athlete stay in sport, reach their potential, and remain active long after the competitions end, with a goal of becoming the next generation of inspiring female coaches and role models. This online training includes the following elements:

- The Evolving Story of Girls in Sport
- Why Girls Aren't Participating in Sport and Activity
- Mechanic, Energetic and Relationship Injuries and Prevention
- How to Create Safe, Strong, Supportive Environments
- Why Girls Quit Sport
- Keeping Girls Healthy
- Key Themes for Keeping Girls in Sport
- Coaching Elements + Keeping Sport Fun and Engaging

[The Gender Equity Self-Assessment Tool](#) for Sport Clubs and Provincial/Territorial Sport Organizations is a practical tool designed to help sport and physical activity organizations assess whether their programs, services, and facilities meet a satisfactory standard of gender equity. Results will help organizations identify areas where they can focus their efforts to strengthen their engagement of women and girls as participants and leaders.<sup>4</sup>

## Sexual Orientation

New data shows that homophobia is still alive and well in Canadian sports (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (Canadian Women & Sport), 2019). The study, which is the first of its kind, suggests anti-gay attitudes are deterring young people from being active in some athletic fields. The survey, called Out on the Fields, was conducted online in six English-speaking countries — U.S., U.K., Ireland, Canada, New Zealand and Australia — and promoted through a coalition of sporting organizations. Of the 9,500 participants, 75 per cent were LGBT. The data show that 81% of the Canadians surveyed witnessed or experienced homophobia in sports, while 84% of gay men and 88% of lesbians polled faced slurs in sports. In addition, 86% of Canadian gay youth and 89% of lesbian youth responded that they were not open about their sexuality with their teammates. Of the Canadian participants, 66% said they would feel unsafe in spectator areas if they were open about their sexuality.<sup>5</sup>

AUFC does not tolerate discrimination. Immediately report the discrimination incidents to AUFC. A complaint can be communicated verbally, initially, to an AUFC official or employee but must be followed up in writing (letter and/or email). **[AUFC Incident Report Form](#)** should be submitted to AUFC via email to [info@akalunited.com](mailto:info@akalunited.com)

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<sup>4</sup> Canadian Women and Sport - The Gender Equity Self-Assessment Tool

<sup>5</sup> Canada Soccer – Guide to Accessibility and Inclusion

## Mental Health

Mental health is different from the absence of mental illness and is integral to our overall health. Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to their own community. Good mental health buffers us from the stresses and hardships that are part of life for us all and can help to reduce the risk of developing mental health conditions. Even when someone develops a mental health condition, they can nevertheless experience good mental health, and this can contribute to their journey of recovery.<sup>6</sup>

### **Signs & Symptoms**

Many children and youth will exhibit different moods, thoughts and behaviours at various times that can be part of normal childhood development. These include:

- getting significantly lower marks in school
- avoiding friends and family
- having frequent outbursts of anger
- changes to sleeping or eating habits
- acting out or rebelling against authority
- drinking a lot and/or using drugs
- not doing the things he or she used to enjoy
- worrying constantly
- experiencing frequent mood swings
- not concerned with his or her appearance
- obsessed with his or her weight
- lacking energy or motivation
- increased risk-taking behaviour
- feeling very down

But these characteristics and behaviours may be signs of an underlying mental health concern or disorder if they:

- are intense
- persist over long periods of time
- are inappropriate for the child's age
- interfere with the child's life

Some of the most common disorders among children and youth include:

- anxiety
- attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) — also known as attention deficit disorder (ADD)
- depression and other mood disorders
- schizophrenia
- eating disorders<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Canada Soccer – Guide to Accessibility and Inclusion

<sup>7</sup> Canadian Mental Health Association - Child and Youth Mental Health: Signs and Symptoms

## Religion

The relationship between sports and religion can sometimes be challenging, but as with other considerations for creating accessible, inclusive, and welcoming environments, organizations should adapt their practices and programs to consider different religious beliefs. While sport can be a positive vehicle to overcome religious intolerance, insensitivities to accommodating religious diversity may discourage people from taking part in sport.

Insensitivities and areas of accommodation may include but is not limited to:

- training or playing days that conflict with religious observation;
- not providing a place or appropriate environment for observation or prayer;
- fasting and perceived effects on performance;
- other dietary requirements;
- conforming to a dress code;
- providing only communal change rooms;
- gender mixing at practices, games, and/or team transport; and/or,
- tolerance or appropriateness of sponsors or advertising logos on team uniforms that contradict religious observation (e.g. gambling, loan companies, alcohol).

While the issue of inclusion of certain people or lifestyles that other people claim to find offensive based on religion remains fluid, there are still many steps that sports can take to create a more tolerant, encouraging, and accommodating environment for people with different religious beliefs. Examples include:

- setting aside a quiet, demarcated space as a prayer area or religious observation area;
- allowing players to take breaks during practice for religious observation;
- creating set time for single gender practices or “closed to public” matches;
- accommodating dress codes in team uniforms; and/or
- making wet towels available for fasting players to cool down on hot game days when they are unable to drink water.

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