

Dear Inclusion Clare members, residents and participants, families, and community members,

As a charitable, non-profit and volunteer led organization funded through the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, it is our duty as the board of Inclusion Clare to be transparent in our actions, operations, and communications. As such, we, the members of the Board of Directors of Inclusion Clare, provide below a clear statement of facts in response to recent troubling, not to mention defamatory, misinformation and accusations circulating on social media over the last few weeks. Though difficult, we have read each one, and have reflected on them as we wrote this, our statement, in response. At this time, we ask for you, the readers, to read our statement through to the end. Though we understand not all will agree, we believe you will have a clearer picture of what Inclusion Clare is, and how it operates overall as a non-profit association.

Responsibilities of Directors

It is important to note that, having each signed confidentiality agreements upon election as board members, and out of respect for past and present individuals using our services, and their families, we can not provide any information that may breach that confidentiality. Having said this, all information provided below aligns with Inclusion Clare's bylaws; vision, mission, and values; policies and procedures; and the terms and conditions of agreements with our program funding sources. Also, as per the terms and conditions of the Small Option Home agreement with Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, as the "Service Provider", Inclusion Clare is required to refrain from any activities involving the home that could create a real or perceived conflict of interest. This includes any decisions made by the board or staff overseeing daily operations of the services provided.

We take those two legally binding promises, confidentiality and avoidance of conflict of interest, very seriously. It is for this reason that we have remained silent despite many public and private, and often disrespectful and threatening, demands to "explain why". Until now. And we will do so respectfully and while maintaining confidentiality.

Response to recent questions

In preparing our statement, we grouped all recent posts/comments on social media, and letters received directly by board and staff referencing the integrity of Inclusion Clare into four general topics. For the sake of readability, the following statements of facts are presented in bullet form under these four topics.

1. *What does Inclusion Clare support/promote?*

Our vision is simple: To inspire confidence and ensure inclusion. We envision this for the individuals we serve, and their families; our staff and volunteers; and for our community as a whole. We achieve this by way of our mission: to foster and promote accessible and responsive living, working and learning opportunities in service of adults with disabilities in the community of Clare; and by empowering self-advocates in achieving their individual potential for full community living.

2. *How are decisions made at Inclusion Clare?*

As a public Society with Registry of Joint Stocks, Inclusion Clare has bylaws that must be followed. The current bylaws have been in effect since 2015 and followed by all boards since that time. Our mandate is to promote and oversee the operations of programs directed to the community integration, empowerment, and well being of persons with disabilities. To do so effectively, the board oversees higher level business of running a non-profit organization such as developing, approving and reviewing strong and fair policies; ensuring fiscal responsibility and sustainability; and being accountable to the members. As per our bylaws, the board has the authority to hire an Executive Director to oversee the day-to-day activities of Inclusion Clare – a position with great responsibility and requiring a strong yet caring individual with exceptional decision-making skills, dedication and integrity. It is with the understanding of our roles as board members, and with unwavering confidence in the Executive Director, that each and every action, decision, publication made by the board and staff is guided by our common values: Respect, Culture, Equity, Moral Courage, Self Direction, Learning Together, Community Support, and Creativity. Above all, all decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, with consideration to the needs and well being of all individuals involved; on a need-to-know basis due to privacy laws and our promise of confidentiality; and with attention to avoiding any conflict of interest.

3. *What is Inclusion Clare's policy of admission, and discharge from, suspension or termination of services from the day and residential programs?*

To understand our policy to terminate services, it is best to first know who uses our services and how they are accessed. Our “clients” (we/they prefer to use the terms “residents” and “workers”) are adults with disabilities. They are individuals with likes, dislikes, hopes, dreams, skills, talents, rights and responsibilities like everyone else. For the most part, they first access our services supported by family or a guardian. Staff work in collaboration with families to ensure our services are a good fit for each potential resident or worker. This requires taking into consideration their comfort within the living or work environment, their interactions with others, their level of independence, and many other things. Access to service is granted to residents and workers upon meeting all admission criteria and completion of required documentation. They, and the family or guardian, must also agree with Inclusion Clare’s processes, policies, procedures, philosophy or mission.

As for the discharge from or suspension of services to a resident or worker, Inclusion Clare endeavours to provide a quality service to all who access our services. However, under certain circumstances, Inclusion Clare is not always able to offer or continue to offer those services. Our discharge policy (available in full at www.inclusionclare.ca, under “Resources”) includes several possible situations which may lead to the discharge of a resident or worker. Some examples are:

- A specific behaviour or event caused by the resident or worker;
- The resident or worker’s support needs change and Inclusion Clare is no longer able to meet those needs;
- Staffing needs exceed funded staff positions
- Creating situations which compromise the safety of others;

- The family/guardian of the resident or worker will not work collaboratively with Inclusion Clare; and
- For other reasons as deemed detrimental to the overall function and philosophy of the organization.

Each situation is different, and the terms of not admitting an individual or of discharge or suspension will be unique to the circumstances of the specific situation.

Termination of services is not taken lightly by the board nor the staff. It is considered a last resort after significant attempts to rectify the specific situation are deemed to be unsuccessful. Some strategies that may be used by staff are team meetings, family meetings, individualized agreements between Inclusion Clare and residents/workers or family members. In rare instances, the service of a mediator, consultations with appropriate Department of Community Services representatives, or other appropriate outside organizations, may be deemed necessary to ensure diligence is taken to attempt to reach a suitable resolution for all parties involved. Ultimately, the admission, discharge, suspension or termination of service to a resident or worker is a decision made by the Executive Director, in consultation with, and supported by, the board of directors and management.

4. *How can families, guardians and community members support adults with disabilities and Inclusion Clare's mission?*

The board and staff recognize the important role families play in the lives of the individuals who use our services. That vital connection to loved ones is a key factor in the overall wellbeing of the residents and workers. To further support this positive state of mind and living, we encourage family members, friends and community members to:

1. Respect the rights and personhood of the individuals we support, as set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including the right to:
 - privacy
 - self-determination and the right to accept risk
 - participate in decisions, indicate preferences and make choices regarding lifestyles
 - individuality and acknowledgement of their uniqueness
 - meaningful and intimate relationships
 - interact with other members of the community
 - adequate support in their day to day life
 - vote
2. Support and participate in Inclusion Clare activities (i.e. online auction, community meals, sharing of posts on Facebook, helping us to promote the organization, etc.)
3. Encourage residents and workers to learn to do as much as possible for themselves and find ways to ensure they are meaningfully engaged/included in community
4. Become involved with the organization as a volunteer (i.e. serve on the Board and committees, volunteer to help with events, assist in developing and/or providing programming for workers and residents, etc.)



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Conclusion

To summarize, operational decisions made by Inclusion Clare's Executive Director and/or the board are - and must always be - made with deep reflection, empathy, due diligence, attention to personal bias and conflict of interest. Above all, decisions are based on Inclusion Clare's bylaws, policies, vision, mission and values. We take decision-making and its implications very seriously; even when the decision is hard to make or when we know it will not be a popular one from the outside looking in. However, we know that to make decisions any other way would be irresponsible on our part, and not in the best interest of the organization as a whole – that is, the best interest of residents, workers, families, staff, volunteers, and community and funding stakeholders.

There are many, many positive things happening at Inclusion Clare. We sincerely ask that you take the time to personally discover these and all the other great things going on with residents and workers. We encourage you to book a time to see what we do and what we are all about. See for yourself how we inspire confidence and ensure inclusion each and every day.

Sincerely and Respectfully,
The Board of Directors of Inclusion Clare

Monette Robichaud, Board Chair
Toni Pfeffer, Director
Collette LeBlanc, Director

Brian Ashe, Vice Chair
Justin Martin, Director
Howard Blinn, Director

Nicole Thimot, Secretary
Joline LeBlanc, Director
Rhonda Zasitko, Director