



COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (DEI)

In our efforts to alleviate conditions of poverty in our mission areas – namely education, housing, and substance use/treatment – Specialty Family Foundation (SFF) has recognized that systemic racism is in and of itself one of poverty’s greatest enabling conditions. Therefore, to maximize our impact and avoid contributing to the harmful effects of systemic racism, we are taking the following steps to layer an expert and informed Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) perspective over our work and organizational culture.

Diversity expands our perspective: We believe a person’s race, gender, sexual orientation, age, immigration status, income status, abilities, and religious beliefs are integral to their identity. We seek to engage, support, and learn from leaders and organizations that reflect diverse perspectives and lived experiences.

Equity ensures justice: We believe inequitable outcomes are a result of systemic oppression and contribute to persistent poverty in America. We will use our position and leverage our power to advocate for equity and accountability.

Inclusion supports better outcomes: We believe that when all individuals are valued and able to live, contribute, and engage from their innate source of power, everyone benefits.

At SFF, we are committed to humility in our approach to DEI. Each time we ask our expert partners, community leaders, and their clients to share their truths and experiences, we inevitably uncover ignorance in our understanding. We aspire to the self-awareness of Dorothy Day, who said we must seek a more truthful perspective in dialogue with those whose lives are more directly impacted by systemic racism, “because people insulated by their own comfort lost sight” of the presence of inequity in their midst. For these reasons, SFF is committed to adopting a guided and perpetual approach to DEI, which includes:

- Maintaining an external DEI Resource Consultant to guide and support where needed:
 - Board & staff professional development
 - Evaluation of DEI policies and procedures
 - Development of HR and governance policies
 - Grantmaking practices, diligence, and goal setting, including the process of selecting grantees and their grant purposes
 - Equitable evaluation of all major strategies and outcomes including the Impact Plan
- Listening to our grantee partners and those most impacted by systemic inequality, to inform and guide us in the following areas:

- HOUSING: We believe in housing as a human right. We acknowledge the shameful history of systemic racism in housing, including the multi-generational exclusion of homeownership through redlining and explicitly biased financial and mortgage practices as well as the racist application of eminent domain. We recognize that this historical reality still affects millions of Los Angelinos who are either “rent burdened,” unhoused, or sit too close to the cliff of homelessness. SFF is committed to attending to this inequity through its investments in the housing space.
- INNER-CITY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS: Access to a quality education is not equitable in America or Los Angeles. The outcomes speak for themselves, with students of color repeatedly scoring lower as a group on standardized tests and when dropout rates, matriculation rates, and rates of truancy and disciplinary action are measured. An equitable education system would not produce such results. Likewise, in Catholic schools, resources, opportunities, and outcomes are not distributed equitably from school community to school community. However, we have regularly observed that inner-city Catholic schools can and do serve as vehicles of equity; historically, studies show that these schools can significantly narrow the achievement and attainment gaps that result from race-based and income-based disparities in educational sectors. We seek to learn from, maintain, expand, and scale this type of equity impact as an objective of SFF’s partnerships in Catholic education.

Catholic schools have a social justice mandate to teach students about the dignity of every single person and the responsibility we each have to be forces of equity and social justice in our communities and our world. SFF supports schools, especially Catholic schools, that teach students about the truth of systemic inequity and how we each have an obligation to be part of solving it.

- SUBSTANCE USE/TREATMENT: In our work and in our learning, SFF has seen the extensive systemic inequity present in the health systems, criminal justice systems, pharmaceutical systems, and financial systems that underpin how substance use is experienced in America and here in Los Angeles. People of color and other oppressed individuals in Los Angeles are time and again more likely to:
 - Suffer untreated substance use issues in their homes and bodies,
 - Be placed on a criminal accountability path rather than on evidence-based treatment paths,
 - Suffer negative housing and employment consequences related to substance use, and
 - To die of overdose or related health problems from substance use.

Moreover, substance use has long been a scapegoating tool of blame used to label other types of inequity (education, criminal, housing, employment...) as the fault of marginalized groups; as opposed to the substance use issues of more privileged groups, which are often viewed through relatively more compassionate and destigmatized lenses. At SFF our grants will focus on closing these equity gaps in our community and we will assess projects to diminish, directly or indirectly contributing to the pervasive inequity we observe in this space.