Alliance against Violence and Adversity (AVA): National Health Research Training Platform and Women's & Girls' Health Hub

Guiding Principles

These guidelines detail AVA's objectives, commitments, priorities, and expectations of all team members.

Objectives:

- ***Strengthen and build capacity*** to transform population (community) health and social services to promote the health and wellness of girls, women, and gender-diverse people, at risk/affected by violence and adversity over the life cycle.

- ***Use a collaborative, innovative***, cross-sectoral/disciplinary/jurisdictional training platform to train hundreds of Canadian service providers and academics in the social services/community health field working with this population.

- ***Make intergenerational and population impacts***, and promote positive lifespan health for girls, women, and gender-diverse people.

- ***Convene regional and national knowledge mobilization meetings*** in both official languages.

- ***Create and share inventory of evidence-based programs/interventions*** for diverse groups of girls, women, and gender-diverse people.

- ***Foster scale-up of newly generated and existing knowledge and models of practice*** (e.g. programs, interventions).

AVA's Commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA)

- AVA is committed to addressing inequities and health disparities disproportionately impacting girls, women, and gender-diverse people with intersectional identities. This includes, but is not limited to, (dis)ability, race, and gender identity. Achieving EDIA and undertaking Sex and Gender-Based Analysis (SGBA+) are core to reaching AVA's objectives.
- AVA seeks to ensure sensitivity to EDIA, cultural and emotional safety, in all aspects of the AVA Training Platform and Health Hub by engaging with Patient Partners and AVA designated

Champions who specialize in EDIA, Indigenous Knowledge, SGBA+ and Black and Other racialized people (Ruzycki & Ahmed, 2022).

- AVA aims to strengthen and build capacity to address the intersections between sex, race, (dis)ability, social locations, gender-diversity and other identities, while acknowledging (to the degree possible) the impacts of colonialism, classism, racism, and Canadian culture (albeit recognizing that AVA may influence, but cannot itself change, these things).
- AVA recognizes that diverse voices from community experts, as well as Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, and Metis), Black, and other racialized people, continue to be minimal and minimalized in academic research; hence, our aim is to have academic, community, Indigenous, Black, and other racialized people, as partners, co-creating culturally safe, supportive, and reciprocal learning for all team members.
- All team members whether academic or community partners, or mentees, are considered trainees engaged in reciprocal learning.
- AVA also commits to principles of integrated knowledge translation (iKT) including:
    - true partnership, rather than simple engagement,
    - considering iKT is an approach to research rather than a methodology,
    - core values of co-creation, reciprocity, trust, fostering relationships, collaboration, respect, co-learning, active participation, democratisation of knowledge and shared decision-making in the generation and application of knowledge (Nguyen, Graham, Mrklas, 2020).

AVA's EDIA Priorities

- Priority is applied to Indigenous, Black and Other racialized people, as well as disabled, gender-diverse and other identities.
- We prioritize equity by removing systemic barriers and biases in recruitment, application, and participation processes.
- We prioritize diverse perspectives and lived experiences (e.g. races, places of origin, religions, immigrants, and newcomers, etc.) and ensure representation amongst the AVA team.
- We prioritize inclusion by valuing and respecting all contributions, particularly eliminating hierarchies, by treating team members equally.
- We prioritize the two key objectives of the Government of Canada's EDI Tri-Agency Action Plan for 2018-2025 by ensuring fair access to Tri-Council resources and ensuring equitable participation in recruitment of trainees.
- All AVA members should prioritize EDIA training as part of the core AVA courses in AVA Online.

AVA's Expectations

- AVA seeks to ensure EDIA in all aspects of the AVA Training Platform and Health Hub by engaging with Patient Partners and AVA designated Champions who specialize in EDIA, Indigenous Knowledge, SGBA+ and Black and Other racialized people.

- EDIA principles influence selection of participants to take part in AVA programs (e.g. Community Agency Internship; Early Career Researcher Teaching Release).
- All AVA committees should draw on interdisciplinary, multisectoral (non-academic community and academic sectors), and trainee representation and those with lived experience in its membership. Committees should include representation from inter-provincial and pan-Canadian institutions, disciplines, jurisdictions, and sectors. As its unlikely that all these diverse constituents will be represented on each committee, access to various AVA team experts will be facilitated as needed (e.g. Platform Advisory Committee, Indigenous Champions, Girls', Women's, and Gender-Diverse People's Committee). Specifically, in the case of lack of/missing representation on a committee, relevant feedback should be sought prior to approvals, as appropriate.
- All AVA team members should attend annual EDIA training.
- AVA Online includes courses specifically designed to enhance trainee and team members' knowledge and practice related to EDIA.
- SGBA+ and intersectionality are core AVA Online curriculum components.
- AVA team members, especially leadership, should have training in SGBA+, intersectionality and research knowledge that address racialized people.
- AVA prioritizes the inclusion of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized people on the AVA team and in trainee recruitment.
- AVA's Land Acknowledgements will include an acknowledgement of the land where AVA headquarters is located (Calgary, Alberta) as well as a national land acknowledgement. The person to provide the land acknowledgements will alternate each time, to allow the opportunity for more personalized acknowledgements.
- In all training activities, including experiential learning activities, internships, networking and/or other innovative training opportunities, attention should be paid to ensure that the Guiding Principles are upheld (e.g. by including EDIA assessments in meeting agendas)
- The EDIA, Indigenous Knowledge, and Black and Other racialized people Champions are represented at the highest level by being part of the Platform Advisory Committee (PAC). These Champions' opinions are sought frequently and as appropriate.
- The call for applicants should prioritize racialized, (dis)abled, gender-diverse and other identities.
- We employ best practices in EDIA recruitment and application adjudication, with our EDIA, Indigenous Knowledge, and Black and Other racialized people Champions reviewing/providing input into the process and written materials in every form.
- We seek equity by removing systemic barriers and biases to recruitment by ensuring all PAC members, who will approve calls for applicants and approve final adjudication of applications, have training on unconscious bias (individual) but also from a systems approach (systemic).
- The AVA training platform and Health Hub develops a broad range of research skills on emerging approaches to responsible research (e.g. SGBA+, research data management, and research involving Indigenous Peoples, ethics, unconscious bias).

- AVA trainee recruitment efforts aim to ensure that diverse perspectives and lived experiences (e.g. race, place of origin, religion, immigrants and newcomers, ethnic origin, ability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and age) are represented among AVA trainees. An example of how this will be done is by advertising training opportunities via community partners and academics that provide services and support to diverse people.
- AVA's mandatory core activities address EDIA (including unconscious bias assessed with the Harvard Implicit Association Test and training with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, which includes unconscious/implicit bias recognition training), SGBA+, and intersectionality, and Indigenous research methods.
- Team members who do not feel that either EDIA principles are adhered to, or who wish to report a conflict of interest should report concern to a leader at AVA, who is not a subject of the concern. In order of consideration, reports can be made to AVA Team leader N. Letourneau, or PAC Chair C. Donnelly, or PAC members who are or who represent Vice-Presidents of the Universities of Manitoba and/or Calgary. If these persons are subject to the concern, reports should be made to the University of Calgary ethics review board.
- AVA Team Champions should review and edit these principles annually.

Definitions

Accessibility: This refers to the provision of flexibility to accommodate needs and preferences, and to the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people who experience disabilities. It can also be understood as "a set of solutions that empower the greatest number of people to participate in the activities in question in the most effective ways possible" (Baker & Vasseur, 2021).

Adversity: This refers to experiences that have the potential to negatively impact the health and wellness of girls and women. This includes Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), defined as a set of exposures to abuse (e.g. physical, emotional, sexual), neglect (e.g. physical, emotional) and household dysfunction (parental mental illness, substance abuse, divorce, intimate partner violence) prior to 18 years of age.

AVA Patient Partners: These are women and gender-diverse individuals who have: (1) lived experience, exposure to, or awareness of being a girl/woman exposed to adversity, including childhood experiences, especially violence, and (2) expertise in patient engagement.

AVA Online: AVA Online is one of the six AVA Training Platform's programs. It includes the curriculum and its online learning on the online Learning Management System called Raising Interdisciplinary Scientist Excellence (RISE), and other learning material found on the AVA Member Portal found at www.avatraining.ca .

(Dis)ability: This is an evolving term representing the interaction between physical, mental, intellectual and/or sensory and environmental barriers that may interfere with full and equitable participation in society (United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2007). Further, it is acknowledged that these impairments or barriers do not detract from other strengths and abilities an individual may have.

Diversity: This consists of the conditions, expressions and experiences of different groups identified by age, education, sexual orientation, parental status/responsibility, immigration status, Indigenous status, religion, disability, language, race, place of origin, ethnicity, culture, socio-economic status, and other attributes. Recognizing and valuing diversity must be accompanied by concerted efforts to ensure inclusion of diverse populations, meaning that individuals are and feel valued, respected, and equally supported (NSERC, 2017).

Equity: This means fairness and implies that people of all identities should be treated fairly. Ensuring equity implies that the processes for allocating resources and decision-making are fair to all and do not discriminate on the basis of identity. There is a need to put measures in place to eliminate discrimination and inequalities which have been well described and reported and ensure, to the best degree possible, equal opportunities. Equity is needed to achieve equality. For example, treating people as equals in an environment in which historical and systemic disadvantages prevent people

from operating as equals can be inequitable – it lacks the fairness of a truly equitable situation (NSERC, 2017)

Gender-Diverse: This term reflects a broader, more flexible understanding of gender identity and expression, than rigid, societally imposed concepts of gender as a binary construct (The Canadian Centre of Gender and Sexual Diversity, 2020).

Inclusion: This requires creating an environment in which all people are respected equitably and have access to the same opportunities. Organizationally, inclusion requires the identification and removal of barriers (e.g., physical, procedural, visible, invisible, intentional, unintentional) that inhibit [applicants'] participation and contribution. Inclusion values and principles include fairness, justice, equity, and respect, by being open to different voices and perspectives, developing an understanding of different cultures, experiences, and communities, and making a conscious effort to be welcoming, helpful and respectful to everyone (NSERC, 2017).

Indigenous Knowledge: Indigenous knowledge and traditional knowledge are used interchangeably to refer to Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing. The term traditional knowledge is used to describe information passed from one generation to the next. Ways in which this is done is storytelling, ceremonies, traditions, dances, medicines, etc. or a combination of these methods. Traditional knowledge is collective knowledge (Crowshoe, 2005).

Intersectionality: This recognizes that inequities are never the result of single, distinct factors. Rather, they are the outcome of interactions of different social locations, power relations and experiences. (NSERC, 2017)

Sex and Gender-Based Analysis Plus (SGBA+): This is used to assess the potential impacts of policies, programs, services, and other initiatives on diverse groups of women, men, and people with diverse gender identities, taking into account multiple identity factors. The "plus" in the name highlights that GBA+ goes beyond gender and includes the examination of a range of intersecting identity factors (such as age, education, sexual orientation, etc.). SGBA+ is an approach that systematically examines sex-based (biological) and gender-based (socio-cultural) differences between men, women, boys, girls and people with diverse gender identities (NSERC, 2017).

References

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Ruzycki SM, Ahmed SB. *Equity, diversity and inclusion are foundational research skills.* Nature Human Behaviour. 2022;6(7):910-912.

Reviewed and approved by study Champions

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