

# Diversity, Social Inclusion & Safety

Developed from *Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed* by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services

**Stepping Up** is a strategic framework from the **Ministry of Children and Youth Services** that strengthens the **Government of Ontario's** commitment to young people. **Stepping Up** consists of seven themes and 20 outcomes that help inform and align the work of service providers, community groups etc. with research and what youth themselves believe they need in order to succeed. **Diversity, Social Inclusion & Safety** is one of the framework's seven themes and has three associated outcomes.


## Why Diversity, Social Inclusion & Safety?

Social inclusion and safety are central to creating a cohesive society and a strong economy that enable future growth and prosperity. Ontario is one of the most diverse places in the world. We want our young people to be included and valued for who they are. In turn, we want them to value diversity and support inclusion in their communities. Young people must be safe, included and accepted, to develop successfully into adulthood.


## What outcomes do we want to see for Ontario youth?



13  
Ontario youth experience social inclusion and value diversity.



14  
Ontario youth feel safe at home, at school, online and in their communities.



15  
Ontario youth respect, and are respected by, the law and justice system.

## Why is this important?

When young Ontarians are safe and supported at home, school, work, online and in their communities, they are able to develop successfully into adulthood. Supporting Ontario's young people to feel safe, included and accepted contributes to overall community safety. Social inclusion and safety are central to creating a cohesive society and a strong economy that will secure our future prosperity and growth.

## 13 / 20 How can we support social inclusion for Ontario youth?

We can help support social inclusion for Ontario youth by:

- **Instilling respect for diversity and equity:** We can promote diversity and equity by providing opportunities for Ontario's young people to develop an appreciation of and respect for the differences of others.
- **Providing culturally-appropriate supports:** Research indicates that creating an environment that is safe and accepting and that allows youth to recognize their cultural strengths and differences supports positive outcomes. Ontario's programs, services, communities and institutions have an opportunity to support a sense of belonging by developing specific social inclusion and diversity policies for youth who are most at-risk.

- **Removing accessibility barriers:** Youth with disabilities, or special needs or mental health barriers have the same needs for participation as their peers. We know that some youth with disabilities face stigma and other barriers to education, work, services and opportunities that support positive development. While their disability may not impact their development, research indicates that the way in which peers and adults interact with youth who have a disability may affect the number and quality of their social experiences.

## 14 / 20 How can we help Ontario's youth feel safe in their environments?

We can help Ontario's youth feel safe in their environments by:

- **Promoting safety at home:** Being safe at home involves having a home environment that is physically healthy and clean. Ontario youth who are in need of safe housing may experience exposure to hazardous materials, lack access to safe water and food, or be homeless.
- **Promoting safety at school:** Feeling unsafe at school can involve exposure to violence – including gun violence, physical fights, abuse or bullying. Ensuring Ontario's schools are safe is important so students can learn and be healthy. We know that feeling unsafe, can impact academic achievement and lead to emotional challenges including risk of self-harm.
- **Promoting safety online:** Evidence indicates that young people are facing an increased risk of victimization through online activities. As technology changes, young people can no longer rely on their home to be a safe place where bullies cannot reach them.
- **Promoting safety in communities:** Having access to safe places to socialize impacts youth confidence, health and positive development. More Ontario youth can achieve positive outcomes when schools, communities and governments work together to ensure young people have safe places to go.

## 15 / 20 How can we support young people to avoid involvement with the justice system, make positive contributions, and get back on track if they face setbacks?

We can support young people to avoid involvement with the justice system, make positive contributions to their communities, and get back on track if they face setbacks by:


- **Intervening early to support youth at risk:** Early intervention and crime prevention involves identifying and addressing young people's risk factors for participating in crime, as well as protective factors.
- **Using effective approaches to prevent crime:** We know that place-based approaches are effective in addressing the causes of youth violence. Youth in disadvantaged communities may experience multiple barriers to success and benefit from programs targeted to where they live, including those that provide safe spaces for youth to go.
- **Improving relationships between communities and police:** We know that many youth and families, especially those living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, do not feel they have positive relationships with police and law enforcement. Improving the important relationships between communities and police has been cited as a key step in reducing youth violence and addressing racism and discrimination in several key reports.
- **Supporting youth to get back on track:** When young people come into conflict with the law, they need to be held accountable for their actions. They also need to be provided with effective programs and reintegration support so they can get back on track with their lives and reduce their chances of re-offending.


## How can a youth program measure these outcomes?

YouthREX has curated measures directly related to the theme of **Diversity, Social Inclusion and Safety**. Each one is youth-friendly and open access, making it easy to use when it comes to evaluating youth programs!

You can find YouthREX's measures [here](#).

Each measure includes the following information:

 An Overview


 Subscales


 Stepping Up Theme(s) & Outcome(s)


 Target Populations

 Length & How it is Measured

 Developers

 Good to Know

 Psychometrics

 Learn More

## Learn More

This factsheet is part of a series of factsheets focused on the Government of Ontario's **Stepping Up** framework. Check out the other factsheets in the series by clicking on the links below:

- [An Introduction to Stepping Up](#)
- [Health and Wellness](#)
- [Strong, Supportive Friends and Families](#)
- [Education, Training and Apprenticeships](#)
- [Employment and Entrepreneurship](#)
- [Civic Engagement and Youth Leadership](#)
- [Coordinated and Youth-Friendly Communities](#)

## For more resources related to Stepping Up, don't forget to visit the eXchange!

The **eXchange** is YouthREX's online learning community. You can visit it anytime and find hundreds of intentionally curated and created resources focused on youth work, all in one place.