

What do “Equity and Equality” mean for Heading Home? Thoughts from our CEO, Dennis R. Plummer



We have been traveling together for the past couple of newsletters through Heading Home’s Core Values. As you will remember, these are: **Justice, Equity, Equality, Safety, Trust, Empowerment** and **Respect**.

You can visit our website to review our overarching value, “[respect](#),” and the value of “[justice](#).” In this article, I wish to combine Equity and Equality, two terms that sometimes cause confusion, or are interchanged.

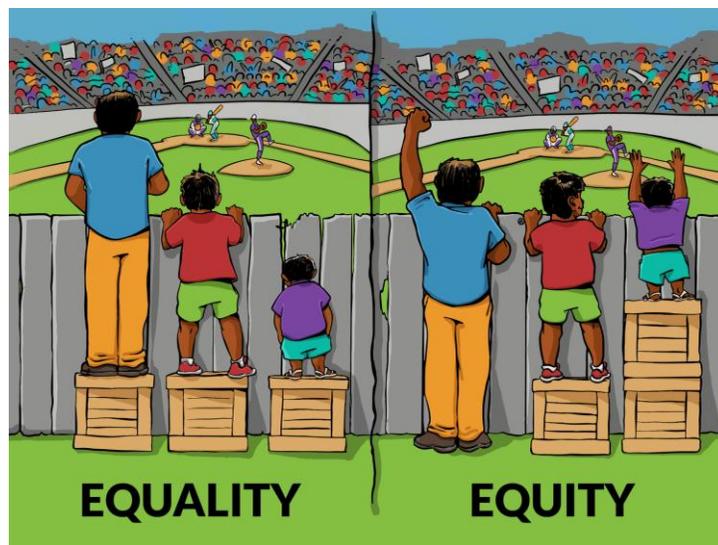
Equity: We prioritize resources to match needs.

- We are committed to a world in which everyone who needs and wants housing, has access to appropriate, safe and affordable housing.
- We are committed to a Housing First model.

Equality: We believe that everyone should have access to housing.

- We are committed to treating all people in a fair and just manner, depending upon their circumstances.

Needless to point out, but these concepts *are* very close in nature. But, they also address two different concepts. We had numerous discussions and lively debates among staff, board and community members about them when forming our values. For me, a well-known cartoon best illustrates the difference.



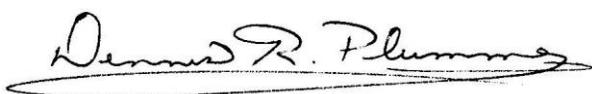
In the depiction, three children are attempting to see a ballgame, but their view is blocked by a fence. The three children are of different heights: one tall, one medium and one short. With equality, each gets a box of equal height upon which to stand. As a result of being treated equally, the tall child now has a clear view of the game, the child of medium height can barely see over the fence and the shorter child still cannot see the game at all. They were treated equally, each receiving the exact same-sized box.

With equity, each child is given a different-sized box—such that when they stand on them, each child now has the same clear view. The tall child has a short box, while the shortest child has the tallest box. The treatment is not equal, but each is treated equitably; they can experience the same outcome.

Our values acknowledge the different points and we desire to address both, to approach everyone fairly with responses adjusted to their needs. You may notice that under equality, we still add the slight caveat “depending upon their circumstances.” This is because our work is fully driven by real encounters with real people. EVERYONE we meet, we desire to do so where they are in life and then to walk with them towards goals that are meaningful to them. By observing both Equity and Equality, and observing the tensions that sometimes occur between the two, we keep ourselves aware of the challenging nuances of needs and the nuanced responses which they require. We keep ourselves client-centric on a daily basis. This general principle permeates our core values.

Stay tuned to upcoming newsletters to see this in our remaining three core values: safety, trust and empowerment!

Sincerely,



Dennis R. Plummer
CEO, Heading Home

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