

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

POLICY MEMORANDUM NUMBER 70

SUBJECT: INCLUSION

I. POLICY STATEMENT - PHILOSOPHY

It is the policy of the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services to recognize that inclusion of diverse populations is not only within our agency, but the larger systems that constitute our environment, programs and clients. As an agency we embrace the concept of an inclusive workplace which is accepting of diverse populations in our own workforce and actively practices acceptance of diverse populations within our community through our programs and services we provide to our clients.

Research has shown that racial and ethnic minorities and people with disabilities are more likely to experience disparities in health status, health outcomes, and access to quality health care. Health disparities can be reduced or eliminated if these high-risk groups become integrated in all DHSS programs and services to ensure their needs are addressed comprehensively and systematically.

II. BACKGROUND

Delaware law prohibits discrimination based upon gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) enacted in 1990 was the world's first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities. DHSS recognizes and celebrates this law that has made a great impact on the lives of people with disabilities. DHSS continues the philosophy outlined in the Preamble of the Act, which states, "to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities."

III. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide uniform standards for the incorporation of inclusive practices in all State Plans, Federal grants, sub-grants, DHSS services specifications and contracts with vendors originating within DHSS. By utilizing these standards, DHSS can ensure the services offered by DHSS are provided in a manner that is as inclusive as possible as well as provide measurements to quantify if the purpose of this policy is being met and identify where there are gaps.

IV. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Divisions, facilities and other entities of DHSS. It also applies to all Federal grants, sub-grants, State Plans, contracts as they relate to direct services to our consumers and all DHSS programs and services.

The term “diverse populations” includes but is not limited to gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and veteran status.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Contracts

DHSS, and its Divisions, shall include in all Requests For Proposals (RFPs), contracts, Federal grants, sub-grants, State Plans and Service Specifications a section which describes how the service will reach, be accessible and be inclusive of diverse populations

B. Advisory Boards and Committees

All DHSS advisory boards, taskforces, councils and committees shall be inclusive and diverse in their membership to ensure representation of diverse populations. To ensure that members of diverse populations may fully participate as a member of the group or as a member of the public to provide comment, program communications and meeting locations must be accessible and accommodations provided, when requested.

C. DHSS Program Access

DHSS is committed to accessibility for diverse populations. In advancement of this mission, the Agency aims to create an inclusive, welcoming environment which respects the dignity and worth of all persons. DHSS is committed to preventing, minimizing and removing the barriers to participation by persons with disabilities.

It is the responsibility of each Division to create an equitable, inclusive and welcoming environment, and to have policies that identify and minimize barriers and provide timely accommodations and interpretation services. DHSS recognizes that persons with disabilities may require reasonable accommodations to fully participate and fully benefit from DHSS programs and services and achieve the highest level of health and well-being.

D. Data Collection & Reporting

Recognizing that the disability status of a participant is not currently identified in all DHSS programs, it is the goal that whenever DHSS is collecting data on programs and services, disability status will be collected along with other demographic information, such as race,

ethnicity, sex and language, as soon as practicable. Disability status, to the extent possible, will be included in any reports generated and/or published on health data and statistics, health disparities, and health equity. The data will be used to identify when programs may not be reaching populations and identify ways to remove barriers or improve outreach and access.

E. Protection of Health Information

Maintaining personal privacy and ensuring the integrity of data collected by DHSS are vital to a robust, functional, and accurate analysis of the State's programs as set forth herein. In carrying out this Policy Memorandum's requirements, obligations, and functions, DHSS shall ensure that all healthcare privacy laws are strictly enforced and honored in the implementation and operation of this Policy Memorandum. Such healthcare privacy laws include, but are not limited to, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), 42 *CFR* Part 2, and 16 *Del. C.* §§ 702, 717, 1211, 1212.

F. Training

Each Division will make available appropriate training for all staff and contract providers on this policy's purpose and responsibilities.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION

A. Any part of this policy which is found to be in conflict with federal or state laws shall be null and void; all other parts shall remain operative.

B. The Division of Management Services (Human Resources) shall be responsible for maintaining this policy and its revisions.

C. The Division of Management Services (Human Resources) shall be responsible for developing training guidelines for the Divisions.

D. This policy will become effective upon issuance.

 
Rita M. Landgraf _____ Date
Secretary

