

SERVICE EQUITY FRAMEWORK

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES



DIRECTING INVESTMENTS AND RESOURCES



DATA- AND EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES



DEVELOPING CHAMPIONS



CUSTOMIZING SERVICES



CREATING DIALOGUE



A Case for Service Equity

Equality doesn't mean equity



This is equality



This is equity

Service Equity Defined

Service Equity promotes health, safety and independence for all Oregonians by adapting services and policy to eliminate discrimination and disparities in the delivery of human services.

This Service Equity framework explains how we are advancing service equity efforts throughout our agency and throughout Oregon as a whole. With long-term policies and short-term actions, we've included information on what we're doing, where we're going and what we've learned.

We're setting forth a new way of working that puts achieving equity front and center and identifies some of the specific actions needed to build a strong and supportive framework for equity throughout DHS.

Collaboration is key! Supporting our staff, stakeholders and community partners in this effort is crucial to the successful outcomes we are striving for. Providing guidance, sharing perspectives, coordinating efforts and strategically implementing actions are fundamental to the framework we're building together. We have our lens focused on equity. Together we are working for better outcomes for Oregonians.

Guiding Principles

DHS takes responsibility for systemic change to advance Service Equity. The following guiding principles provide a broad lens by which this goal is achieved:



Engaging Communities: Strengthening relationships with community partners and advocates allows us to see and access our diverse populations through their lens. True partnership with our local communities means listening to the client voice with humility and respect while integrating it into agency decisions.



Data- and Evidence-Based Practices: Our policies and programs are informed by data while identifying current gaps and disparities and highlighting what works best for different communities. What we mean by data is broad. It is more than just the numbers – we involve communities in identifying relevant data to ensure the collection and analysis is culturally appropriate and informed.



Developing Champions: DHS recognizes our employees as our most valuable resource. Education, support and development of our staff positions each employee to be a champion of equity. Internal collaboration with new and ongoing employee development efforts and tools ensure we are building capacity within to support a true culture shift in how we do our work.



Directing Investments and Resources: Service Equity is integrated throughout budgetary decisions including allocation of funds, contract development and implementation, and supporting policies are created and updated. Leadership makes informed decisions, using all resources available including the Service Equity framework.



Customizing Services for Individuals and Communities: Individualized services are provided to all clients at their specific need level. Community needs inform and guide services. This customized approach at service delivery builds capacity to advance individual and community goals.



Creating Dialogue: Maintaining an open dialogue with intentional efforts focused on education, communication and partnership ensures the elimination of former barriers and disparities. Internal and external communication efforts are centered on inclusion and outcomes.

Guiding Questions

To build upon and advance our efforts surrounding Service Equity, we have established some basic questions aligned with the guiding principles. These guiding questions provide a base for beginning and encouraging the tough conversations surrounding this complex issue.

As you go through these guiding questions it is important to keep in mind the diversity of those we work with and serve. Diversity is not limited to race, gender, disability or ethnicity. We strive for cultural humility, which is the process of self-reflection and awareness, giving careful consideration to our own assumptions and beliefs about others.

We are taking action to provide every possible opportunity to ensure the highest level of service is achieved. Together, with the customer, we are pursuing outcomes that meet the needs of those we serve. We recognize outcomes are affected by our intentions, actions and behavior.



Engaging Communities:

1. How has your organization made a public commitment to Service Equity?
2. Does your organization have formal partnerships with other organizations serving communities with known disparities?
3. What methods are currently in place to measure and assess the overall satisfaction of those you serve?
4. How are clients and advocates currently involved in your decision making process?
5. What efforts are in place now to engage with local communities?



Data- and Evidence-Based Practices:

1. How are you currently collecting relevant data to determine Service Equity practices, needs and assessment?
2. What data is currently being used to drive decisions?
3. What gaps and disparities have already been identified within your office?
4. Have you identified best practices to build upon within your office and community?
5. Do you currently have a method for requesting and receiving feedback, both internally and externally?

Guiding Questions



Developing Champions:

1. Have you established what a Champion of Service Equity is?
2. How does leadership actively communicate with staff?
3. Are you aware of current resources available to you such as training, tools, information?
4. How do you model and encourage Service Equity development and education?
5. How are you building capacity to ensure Service Equity sustainability and growth within your staff?



Directing Investments and Resources:

1. How is Service Equity a factor in budgetary decisions?
2. How do staff demographics reflect those that we serve?
3. Does leadership have current data to make informed decisions?
4. Do current policies support Service Equity within our staffing?
5. What efforts are currently in place to build upon current resources?



Customizing Services for Individuals and Communities:

1. Are services delivered where, when and how clients feel most comfortable in a manner that is easy to access?
2. Are employees able to recognize cultural differences between themselves and the client to effectively build client-helper relationships?
3. Are policies and procedures flexible enough to allow staff to customize services?
4. How do services emphasize client choice and self-determination?
5. How have you identified barriers (physical, cultural, linguistic, monetary, etc.) to accessing services so that they may be eliminated?



Creating Dialogue:

1. How has your organization made a public commitment to Service Equity?
2. How do you cultivate cultural humility, awareness and responsiveness of your staff?
3. How do you promote conversations about cultural and racial differences in a safe work environment?
4. Do you collect and share data with your staff and stakeholders surrounding satisfaction amongst those we serve?
5. How do you engage with staff, clients and communities surrounding Service Equity?

Service Equity in Action

Providing equitable service to Oregonians means customizing the delivery of service to each individual we serve. DHS is using an equity lens to change the way we do business.

Examples:

A Russian-speaking family comes into a local office and is able to receive services in their native tongue. The worker notices there are young children and makes a point to communicate possible services the family may be eligible for but would otherwise not know to request.

DHS Child Care Programs assess the make-up of the community and its diversity and partner with local county departments, community and faith-based organizations to promote education, provide training and seek out all available resources. Using this lens of equity provides access to culturally sensitive resources for families and child care providers while also providing opportunities to collaborate across DHS programs and make connections throughout the community.

Culturally specific community forums are held throughout the state, engaging with and connecting local community leaders on a regular basis. The local Diversity Committee is involved in planning the forums, identifying community leaders along with continuing the dialogue within the agency and community. Disparities identified from data collection and analysis guide the location and demographic of each forum.

DHS local management observe and analyze trends in data indicating the Hispanic population in their local area has a very low usage of domestic violence reporting. Cultural stigma, language barriers and lack of awareness of available programs are found to be indicators of the low numbers. DHS initiates local outreach efforts, in Spanish, to help raise awareness of available resources. Spanish-speaking staff are also trained and made aware so that they can properly refer clients and serve the community.

In rural Oregon, case managers reach out and visit local senior centers, churches and schools to provide access for those who cannot travel to the local office on their own. Visits within the local community help to overcome the stigma often associated with receiving assistance, reduces fear of working with our agency while also establishing trust. Case managers are also able to provide information surrounding eligibility and available resources for elderly and disabled in a comfortable environment.

Taking Action

Equitable outcomes require intentional actions. Please use the planning outline below to guide you toward meeting achievable goals in your workplace.



Service Equity in your daily work

What's working? What isn't working?

Goals

What outcomes are you trying to accomplish and why are they important?

Actions

What three actions can you take to support Service Equity in your daily work?

Resources

What resources are needed for you to be successful? What existing resources (e.g., tools, partnerships, people) can be utilized or built upon to further your goal?

Challenges

What will be the major barriers to making these actions possible (e.g., policies, systems, people)? How can they be overcome?

Champions

Who will actively support you in making these actions happen?

Timelines

What happens when? Assign timelines and track progress.



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