

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION AT PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORIES

A diverse, equitable and inclusive public health laboratory (PHL) workforce is required to attract qualified talent, achieve lasting change and meet the needs of the communities we serve. Getting there can be challenging, but learning about diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I), its impact on the PHL workforce and strategies you can implement to improve DE&I at your laboratory are important first steps!

DIVERSITY

The collective shared human differences, abilities, experiences, perspectives and group characteristics among a group of people. Diversity is a key indicator in workforce development.^{1,2}

Dimensions of diversity:

Race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, social and economic classification, age, disability, religion and more.³

EQUITY

Opportunities and access to achieve, contribute, and advance are distributed fairly, creating an environment that allows people to attain their full potential.³



Equity is not the same as equality. It means providing fair access and opportunities to everyone.

INCLUSION

Leverages diversity to create fair, healthy and high-performing organizations or communities in which everyone can thrive.³

Inclusion is a universal human right! Everyone deserves a chance to fully participate.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DE&I AT PHLs

77% of the public health workforce feels it is important to address the needs of diverse populations in a culturally sensitive manner.⁴

Better Serve Your Community. A workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves can better address health equity issues.⁵



Support Social and Workplace Justice. Improved social equity helps to mitigate disproportionate harm, addresses historical disinvestment and exclusion, and promotes integration at all levels of public health infrastructure and service.⁶

Improve Staff Mental Health. Mental health and DE&I are closely connected; stressors from lack of representation, microaggressions, implicit bias, and other factors have a real impact on psychological safety at work.^{7,8}

Mitigation of implicit bias is critical to increase the success of diversity initiatives.



TOP STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE DE&I IN PHLs



EDUCATE YOURSELF

Read, watch and listen.

Seek out reading lists and other materials on topics such as ableism and antiracism.⁹⁻¹⁵

Understand and address implicit bias.

Recognize and identify your biases, even those that are unconscious/hidden.^{16,17}

Combat bias by practicing microaffirmations of marginalized groups.¹⁸

Learn to engage in respectful dialogue.

Listen actively, embrace friction and be open to different perspectives.¹⁹



RECOGNIZE AND INTERRUPT MICROAGGRESSIONS

Learn to recognize common microaggressions and how to respond.²⁰⁻²²

These small and often unconscious offenses may seem insignificant, but their negative impacts can be severe and long-lasting, especially in the workplace.²³



BECOME AN ALLY OR ADVOCATE

Speak up and take a stand.

Use tips and stories from The Southern Poverty Law Center to get started.²⁴

Be the change.

Doing no additional harm, practicing inclusive language and actions, and being the change you would like to see can help influence change in others.^{25,26}

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KEY DE&I TERMS AND CONCEPTS

ALLY & ADVOCATE

Someone who stands up in support for people from underrepresented or marginalized groups.

Ally: Works to support people outside of their own group.²⁷

Advocate: Speaks up for themselves and members of their own identity group.¹

GENDER

A personal identity expressed through behavior, roles, expectations, and activities within society. Gender is a spectrum that includes the male/female binary and a variety of non-binary identities.¹

SEX

Biological sex characteristics, most often expressed as male or female, but which also includes an array of biological intersex variations.¹

BIAS

Attitudes, judgments or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decisions.

Implicit, or unconscious, bias is often subtle, accidental and/or unintended.²

Explicit, or conscious, bias is overt and often intentional.²⁸

DISCRIMINATION

Unequal treatment based on race or ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation, disability, religion or other categories.²⁹

ETHNICITY

A group that reflects a person's social and cultural identity, which can be based on nationality, language, culture, religion, history, geographic origin and more.^{1, 29}



MICROAFFIRMATION

Small acts or gestures of inclusion, caring and opening doors to opportunity to help others succeed.³⁰



MICROAGGRESSION

Brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or other negative attitudes.^{31, 32}

Recognize Common Microaggressions

Common questions can be perceived as offensive and negative.²⁰⁻²²

What's said:
 "Where are you from?"

How it's interpreted:
 "You don't look like you belong here."

RACE

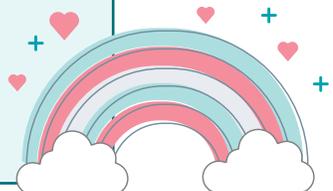
A group that a person identifies with, usually on the basis of physical characteristics, and can also include cultural and social attributes.^{1, 29}

SOCIAL JUSTICE

A state in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure.²⁹

TOLERANCE

Acceptance and open-mindedness of different practices, attitudes and cultures; it does not necessarily mean agreement with the differences.¹



Learn more and be the change.

Find a full list of references at www.aphl.org/DEI-References

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