

Equity Policy Framework for State Government

Approved by CCEPD on 9/10/2021

Equity Document for State Government (Health and Human Services and Labor and Workforce Development Agencies)

- People with disabilities are in every demographic, occupation, and societal group, and contribute to the rich diversity of the State of California reflecting the racial/ethnic and gender diversity.
- People with disabilities have demonstrated their talents and skills through their leadership in government, by becoming business owners and by working in every industry.
- People with disabilities continue to face discrimination and societal prejudice based on misconceptions of their skills, abilities, or character orientations, resulting in institutional barriers for education, training, and employment opportunities.
- To be successful in promoting true equity for all Californians, equity initiatives and efforts need to include people with disabilities. Achieving true equity includes promoting equity for people with disabilities across all programs and services.

Why include people with disabilities?

- Disability must be part of the conversation. People with disabilities are in every racial/ethnic, gender, and socio-economic group and live in every community.
- People with disabilities must be included in the conversation. Representation matters, and diverse representation within departments and within policy conversations is essential to the goal of equitable service delivery.
- People need to become more educated about misconceptions. Ableism promotes the idea that able-bodied people are to be favored above people with disabilities. Ableism is harmful because it perpetuates misconceptions about people with disabilities and continues the thinking that people with disabilities are “less than” other individuals or have limited skills due to their disability. Like other forms of discrimination, ableism creates both attitudinal and structural barriers that prevents people from reaching their full potential.
- Disability rights are civil rights.

How to address equity, diversity, and inclusion for people with disabilities?

Recognize the diversity of people with disabilities: People with disabilities have a diverse variety of skills, talents, and interests. People with disabilities have a diversity of identities and are represented in every race/ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic group. Their lived experience grants unique insights and perspectives that are valuable in any environment. People of color with disabilities face even greater barriers due to systemic and institutional barriers. Service providers, programs, and policies should ensure that supports are provided to people of color with disabilities for education, employment, and training needs. All people with disabilities should have the opportunity to use their talents and skills without fear of discrimination or have unnecessary barriers created by policies.

Data collection: Departments should collect and analyze data about services provided to people with disabilities to evaluate the effectiveness of accessibility services, outreach to people with disabilities, service delivery strategies and equitable outcomes. Departments should strive to scale up disability-related initiatives, programs, and services to ensure equitable access and outcomes for people with disabilities across all programs and services.

Non-discrimination and universal access: Departments should move beyond minimum compliance requirements to develop a culture that encourages diversity and supports effective strategies for increasing physical, programmatic, and outcome access for people with disabilities. Departments should expand definitions of universal accessibility and reasonable accommodation to help drive an innovative and high-performing culture and productive workplace. Assistive technology, universal accessibility, and reasonable accommodations are tools for people with disabilities to be supported in a work environment and can lead not only to increased productivity of employees with disability but can also attract more diverse talent to your business, and lead to innovations in meeting business and customer needs.

Assistive technology: Information technology departments and information technology employees within departments should be knowledgeable on how assistive technologies interact with software, web applications, or websites in

operation of programs and service delivery. Any software, web applications, and websites used internally by staff or externally by customers should be accessible to people who use assistive technology. Frontline workers providing services should know where to refer individuals who need assistance with acquiring or learning to use assistive technology.

Service-delivery models: Departments should develop models that encourage cross-collaboration, co-enrollment, and co-case management with disability-related organizations and programs. Departments should work with disability-related organizations and programs to build feedback mechanisms to evaluate access, service delivery strategies, outcomes, effectiveness, and equity of programs, policies, and customer satisfaction for people with disabilities within programs and policies. All state programs serve people with disabilities and should include them as part of the stakeholder and decision-making process.

Training: All staff and management should have ongoing disability awareness training and implicit bias training for hiring and retention of people with disabilities. Frontline staff providing services to the public should be provided with additional training on providing services to people with disabilities, including but not limited to training on disability etiquette, disability resources and services across departments, benefits planning resources, assistive technology, and disability rights.

What Can You Do?

Model the Way

- Review your current diversity, equity, and inclusion statement and include people with disabilities in department statements.
- Identify key initiatives to engage people with disabilities when developing policies and programs.
- Engage with disability advisory committees.

Be a Model Employer as State Agency or Department

- Review existing resources and identified best practices in hiring and retaining people with disabilities.
- Identify measurement goals to assess progress of hiring and retaining people with disabilities.
- Promote ongoing training efforts on disability-related topics.

- Ensure staff are aware of, and can easily navigate reasonable accommodation policies and procedures, removing any unnecessary or burdensome barriers to obtaining needed accommodations.
- Ensure staff are aware of accessibility requirements for both the physical office and software programs/shared documents, including training on advancements in accessible information technology to maintain equity in a productive workplace.

Strive Towards Equity and Inclusion in Service Delivery

- Develop an organizational culture that strives to include people with disabilities in all available programs and services.
- Utilize best practices and lessons learned from disability specific programs, initiatives, and organizations.
- Build front line staff capacity through training on disability awareness, unconscious and implicit bias, reasonable accommodations, assistive technology, and identified best practices for providing services to people with disabilities.
- Build front line staff capacity through cross training with disability-related organizations.
- Expand accessibility through the incorporation of virtual services into traditional service delivery models.
- Include people with disabilities and disability-related service providers in outreach strategies to ensure equitable access to and awareness of available services.
- Develop cross-system approaches and co-enrollment strategies to provide comprehensive services to people with disabilities.
- Identify measurement goals to assess accessibility of services and outcomes for people with disabilities.