

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)

Self-Assessment for Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs

Older adults of historically marginalized communities (those that have been excluded from the “dominant social, economic, educational, and/or cultural life”¹) often come into long-term services after experiencing a lifetime of barriers due to discrimination. The U.S. Census estimates that more than half of Americans will belong to a minority group by 2044, so the need for inclusive, culturally aware, and trauma-informed services will continue to increase.²

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) are essential elements for creating a foundation that ensures fair treatment and full participation of all individuals, especially those that have been underrepresented and marginalized.

This self-assessment checklist is designed to introduce DEIA terminology to Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) operations and activities; provide a starting point for program management, advocacy, and outreach with a DEIA lens; and assist LTCOPs in identifying areas for growth in ensuring equitable and inclusive services. This is an introduction, not a comprehensive list of considerations when recruiting, hiring, and supporting staff and volunteers; serving residents; conducting systems advocacy; providing consumer education; and other program activities.

Definitions³

Diversity: The practice of including the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of the American people, including underserved communities.

Equity: The consistent and systemic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.

Inclusion: The recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of employees of all backgrounds.

Accessibility: The design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them.

¹ Sevelius, J. M., Gutierrez-Mock, L., Zamudio-Haas, S., McCree, B., Ngo, A., Jackson, A., Clynes, C., Venegas, L., Salinas, A., Herrera, C., Stein, E., Operario, D., & Gamarel, K. (2020). *Research with marginalized communities: Challenges to continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Cited in the [Inclusive Language Guide](#). American Psychological Association.

² U.S. Census Bureau. [Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060](#). March 2015.

³ Definitions adapted from U.S. Office of Personnel Management. [Government-wide DEIA: Our Progress Forward to Building a Better Workforce for the American People](#). Annual 2022.

DEIA SELF-ASSESSMENT⁴

The self-assessment includes program considerations in three categories: policies and practices; inclusion, representation, and accessibility; and training and support. Review the following statements and select the response that most closely reflects your program’s status (Yes, No, Unsure).

Use the blank section for notes about your initial thoughts regarding areas of difficulty, what you have done in each category, and/or plans for improvement. For some of the broader statements, you may have multiple answers and need notes on specific action steps. For example, you may have non-discrimination policies that apply to hiring staff but may not have similar policies for recruiting and hiring volunteers.

POLICIES & PRACTICES			
	YES	NO	NOT SURE
A high-level commitment to DEIA is a priority for our program.			
NOTES:			
Our program has, or participates in, a group or taskforce to discuss and plan for on-going advancement of DEIA.			
NOTES:			
Our mission, vision, and/or values demonstrate a commitment to DEIA.			
NOTES:			
DEIA goals are part of our strategic plan.			
NOTES:			

⁴ Statements adapted from the [Equity Assessment Checklist](#) from the Older Adults’ Equity Collaborative (funded by the U.S. Administration for Community Living), the [Organizational Diversity, Equity and Inclusion \(DEI\) Self-Assessment Tool](#) from the Standards for Excellence Institute, and Tawara D. Goode, Assistant Professor and Director, Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence during the [Cultural and Linguistic Competence: What it Means for Ombudsman Programs](#) webinar for NORC, June 10, 2020.

Our program treats residents with respect and their differences are valued.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
We treat our program representatives with respect and their differences are valued.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
We ensure residents that are representative of historically marginalized communities have equitable access to LTCOP services.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
We have non-discrimination policies that apply to all program responsibilities (e.g., hiring and firing of staff, recruiting and managing volunteers, providing Ombudsman program services).			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
Our office has a gender-neutral restroom or informs staff and visitors that anyone may use the bathroom of their choice based on their gender identity.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
Our staff and volunteers know, and use, the preferred name and pronouns of residents, family members, facility staff, our program staff and volunteers, other staff members, and stakeholders.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			

We provide accommodations, when needed, for our staff and volunteers (e.g., assistive technology, interpreters, modified workspaces, modifying job duties, flexible schedules).			
---	--	--	--

NOTES:

INCLUSION, REPRESENTATION, & ACCESSIBILITY

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
--	-----	----	----------

Our program materials (e.g., promotion and outreach, volunteer recruitment, training) include pictures of diverse individuals receiving long-term services and serving as program representatives.			
--	--	--	--

NOTES:

Our program displays various symbols, logos, posters, celebratory flags, banners, etc., that represent diverse communities to demonstrate our support and commitment to inclusion.			
--	--	--	--

NOTES:

Our program strives to recruit, hire, support, and maintain staff and volunteers that are representative of our diverse service area (e.g., we share job/volunteer opportunities with diverse communities and organizations, job/volunteer descriptions have inclusive language, job/volunteer descriptions include a statement about non-discrimination and equal treatment).			
--	--	--	--

NOTES:

Our committees, advisory council, and/or board are representative of our diverse community and include members such as people with disabilities, people with different racial backgrounds, age diversity, and gender diversity.			
---	--	--	--

NOTES:

Our programs and events are accessible to people with disabilities.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
Our materials and website are compliant with accessibility criteria.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
Our program partners with organizations and advocacy groups that share our interests and represent diverse and historically marginalized communities.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
Our program conducts culturally informed and accessible community education.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
Our services and materials are provided in the preferred languages of the residents we serve.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
We review our materials regularly to ensure any written information is at an appropriate reading level for residents and family members.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			

TRAINING & SUPPORT

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
During orientation for members of our board, advisory council, and/or committees, we provide training on our commitment to DEIA and our expectations and practices.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
We require participation in cultural competency training for staff and volunteers to ensure we are providing equitable access to inclusive services.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
Our agency maintains relationships with community-based organizations to support ongoing cultural competency training.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
Our staff and volunteers know how to enter, learn cultural norms, and interact respectfully in culturally and linguistically diverse communities.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			
Our program informs family and resident councils of the importance that councils represent the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the facility and respond to cultural differences.			
<i>NOTES:</i>			

Our program ensures staff and volunteers are aware of power differences based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and disability and make efforts (within the LTCOP role and scope) to balance power.			
NOTES:			

NEXT STEPS

There is no “right” or “wrong” way to use this self-assessment, as there are many ways you can move forward after completing this tool. For example, after completing the self-assessment, you could choose one section to analyze further. When analyzing a section, you could work with your program to develop a plan to bring each statement that is currently “no” or “unsure” to “yes” and/or you could identify areas where additional expertise, discussion, and/or training is needed to move forward.

This is not a comprehensive list of considerations, but a starting point for continuous improvement. For examples from other programs or requests for technical assistance, please contact NORC, ombudcenter@theconsumervoice.org.



RESOURCES

Older Adults' Equity Collaborative | ACL Administration for Community Living

The Older Adults' Equity Collaborative (OAEC) includes five ACL-funded national Minority Aging Technical Assistance and Resource Centers (TARCs) that each focus on serving a unique community. Together, they work to ensure access and equity across aging services programs by providing technical assistance (TA) to the aging services network.

Diversity and Cultural Competency | ACL Administration for Community Living

Information and resources from ACL to help increase access to and improve programs for our diverse American population.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Part 84 Final Rule Fact Sheet

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance, including the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has issued a final rule to advance equity and bolster protections for people with disabilities. The final rule updates, modernizes, clarifies, and strengthens the implementing regulation for Section 504.