



Training Solutions Through an Equity Lens

For all residents of Michigan to **experience and create** equitable opportunities to grow and thrive, we must promote a shared understanding of the role that history and culture play in perpetuating and fueling systemic disparities. Through this shared knowledge, we can develop intentional approaches to dismantle institutional and structural inequities that are found across indicators of wellbeing and success, such as education, employment, housing, quality of life, incarceration and more.

The Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) training solutions focus on race extensively (but not exclusively) as we recognize the intersectionality and multilayers of systemic advantage and disadvantage. For organizations to advance equity and incorporate it across departmental lines, **action plans that endorse equity and inclusion are essential** to effectively create the long-term implementation of equitable practices, policies and procedures.

*Overall steps to generate and sustain **intentional strategies for inclusion** consist of:*

- Building organizational commitment and the infrastructure to effectively implement clear action steps
- Increasing understanding of the role and responsibility of leadership in advancing equity
- Developing the skills to operationalize equity and an equity action plan
- Normalizing equitable values across all sectors to promote inclusive practices
- Providing equity and inclusion training to leaders and staff
- Developing the capacity to build and organize a structure for change
- Operationalize equity through policies and procedures

MDCR has worked across Michigan to mitigate discrimination and address its challenges through strategies that transcend technical solutions. To successfully advance equity and inclusion, **it is critical to proactively anticipate unintended consequences** by setting a foundation of knowledge that:

- Normalizes equity, diversity and inclusion as key values embraced by all
- Operationalizes equity via new policies and institutional practices
- Organizes internally in partnership with other institutions and with the community

MDCR's training programs are designed to develop a common language and framework that works to establish **socially conscious and innovative solutions**. Content of programming includes:

- **The business case for diversity**
Explores how a more diverse workforce brings with it more innovation, creativity and a greater variety of perspectives. Research shows that businesses with a more diverse workforce have

more customers, higher revenues and profits, greater market share, less absenteeism and turnover and a higher level of commitment to their organization.

- **Systems of advantage – the narrative**

Explores how societal messages sustain a message that is oppressive to some and advantageous to others. Strategies to recognize these messages along with ways to proactively create new narratives are reviewed.

- **The impact of in-and-out group predispositions, polarized messages and cognitive scripts**

Explores the impact of the human pre-disposition to form in-and-out groups, messages that differentiate groups based on socially constructed categories and the unconscious association process rooted in cultural conditioning. Strategies to interrupt the unintended consequences of these processes are discussed.

- **A common language through an equity lens**

Explores the importance of defining the terms used to have conversations about equity and provides clear definitions that promote shared understanding and a foundation for equitable change.

- **Ideal culture vs. real culture – dissonance between conscious and unconscious values**

Explores the dissonance that exists between our egalitarian conscious values and our unconscious biases and provides a venue to identify and interfere with factors that shape the disconnect between what we believe we do and what we actually practice.

- **Discrimination and harassment**

Incorporates an overview of State and Federal civil rights law, including sexual and other forms of discriminatory harassment, and employee/service provider rights and responsibilities. This material will include the MDCR Investigation/Enforcement process, key definitions related to a quid pro quo or hostile work environment, how to maintain a harassment free space, and offer opportunities to incorporate specific policies and procedures for reporting and investigating complaints of discrimination and harassment.

Sessions build on learned concepts to **promote a shared level of commitment and collective willingness** to implement change through an equity lens. These sessions lead to coaching strategies centered on:

- Defining purpose of implementation of equity framework
- Internal policies, practices, and strategic plan
- Implementing tools designed to interrupt unintended outcomes
- Benefits of implementation
- Strategies for successful implementation
- Measuring, monitoring, and evaluating desired progress
- Identifying community and intergovernmental partners
- Evaluating and communicating desired impact
- Creating scorecards and indicators for success

All workshops incorporate skilled facilitators and multiple strategies for engagement and learning outcomes:

- **Interactive and experiential components:** various forms of sharing information are used (i.e., videos, dyads, small and large group discussions, lectures, interactive activities, etc.) to ensure learning objectives are met.
- **Strategy and methodology:** conversations promote reflection through honest and open dialogue that explores the differences between individual and systemic advantages. Training strategies guide participants to make connections to consider the differences between individual experiences and structural ones.
- **Skilled facilitation:** expert facilitators promote an empowered sense of responsibility to be a part of the solution and guide conversations away from blame and shame. When necessary, facilitators re-design activities in the moment to ensure participants' time and learning experiences are maximized.
- **Focus:** learning extends beyond social justice and highlights the how diverse workforces generate more innovation, creativity and a greater variety of perspectives.

In conclusion, our training strategies and solutions illustrate how systems of advantage are embedded in history, culture and identity. They have internal components and external components. ***These components are moved by power and economics.*** The internal components are shaped by biases, privilege and internalized messages. The external components play out in relationships which are interpersonal, institutional and structural.

Discrimination is pervasive, yet it can be dismantled through systemic strategies that promote change along with real conversations about shared values and principles that sustain inequities today. By reviewing discriminatory practices and policies, we can begin to understand why some spaces thrive and others do not. ***Often, through seemingly neutral approaches, we undermine the impact of internalized messages, cultural conditioning and the unintended consequences of approaches that lack social consciousness.*** We must address the problem through intentional strategies that allow us to isolate forms of marginalization and discrimination in order to effectively dismantle their negative impact.

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