

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Glossary



Purpose: Establish a shared and uniform language to be used in standard MDHHS operation.

Terms are congruent with the MDHHS DEI Plan and will be reviewed/updated once a year. This DEI Glossary is a tool that lists overarching key DEI terms and definitions. Sub-glossaries will be offered under the Training and Professional Development (T&PD) action team page as supplemental resources.

Suggestions: If you have suggestions on other terms that should be added or sub-glossaries, please email MDHHS-DEI@michigan.gov with “T&PD DEI Glossary suggestion” on the subject line.

Ableism

Ableism is a set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, neurological, or psychiatric disability or who are perceived to have disability and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be ‘fixed’ in one form or the other. Ableism characterizes persons as defined by their disabilities and as inferior to the non-disabled.ⁱ

Accessibility

Accessibility is giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses the broader meanings of compliance and refers to how organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings, including access to the physical environment, transportation, information, communication, technologies, systems, facilities, and services provided to employees and the public, both in urban and in rural areas.ⁱⁱ

Ageism

Ageism is the stereotyping and discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of age; ageism can take many forms, including prejudicial attitudes, discriminatory practices, or institutional policies and practices that perpetuate stereotypical beliefs.ⁱⁱⁱ

Bias

A tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone.^{iv}

Community Empowerment

Refers to the process of enabling communities to increase control over their lives. Communities are groups of people that may or may not be spatially connected, but who share common interests, concerns or identities.^v

Cultural Competence

The ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures to ensure the needs of all community members are addressed. It means to be respectful and responsive to the beliefs and practices of diverse population groups.^{vi}

DEI

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.^{vii}

Disability

A disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions).^{viii}

Disparity

A significant difference in outcome that separates a group from a reference point on a particular measure regardless of the underlying reasons.^{ix}

Diversity

The range of human differences, abilities, experiences, and perspectives.^x

Equality

Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities.^{xi}

Equity

Providing tailored approaches based on need while building better outcomes for historically and currently disadvantaged populations. Full access to opportunities, power, and resources necessary for all people to achieve their full potential and thrive, and the fair, just, and equitable distribution and implementation of public services.^{xii}

Explicit Bias

The attitudes and beliefs that we have about a person, group, or thing on a conscious level.^{xiii}

Gender Identity

One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. Relates to a person's internal sense of their own gender. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.^{xiv}

Gender Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this). Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze etc.) specifically refer to people that you are talking about.^{xv} Affording people basic grammatical dignity, acceptance and inclusion while challenging gender binary language limitations.

Examples:

- They – Though mostly used as plural pronouns, “they/their/theirs” are also used to refer to a person (singular) who identifies in gender fluid and/or non-binary (male or female) ways.
- “Mx.” (pronounced “mix”) — an alternative to Ms. and Mr. that was recently added to the Oxford English Dictionary. The “x” in Mx. is meant to represent an unknown, similar to the use of x in algebraic equations.
- Latinx – Spanish is a gender-based language, meaning that each word has a masculine or feminine ending and the plural of a word is always masculine. Spanish is patriarchal language. The plural of Latino/Latina is then Latinos which is masculine and not inclusive of identities that are gender non-conforming/non-binary. We use Latinx in efforts to include LGBTQIA+, especially gender non-confirming individuals. We acknowledge that while some people embrace the term Latinx, some prefer to use Latinos/Hispanic.^{xvi}

Health

A state of complete physical, social, and mental well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.^{xvii}

Health Disparities

Particular types of health differences that are closely linked with social, economic and/or environmental disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.^{xviii}

Health Equity

Fair, just and equitable distribution of and access to public services, social resources and implementation of public policy necessary to achieve well-being and thrive. It requires removing economic and social obstacles and inequities, such as poverty, discrimination and their consequences, as well as build better outcomes for historically and currently disadvantaged populations.^{xix}

Health Inequities

Differences in population health status and mortality rates that are systemic, patterned, unfair, unjust, and actionable, as opposed to random or caused by those who become ill.^{xx}

Heterosexism

A belief that heterosexuality is the only normal and acceptable sexual orientation and is superior to other orientations. Heterosexism discriminates against and excludes people on the basis of sexual orientation.^{xxi}

Homogeneous

Derives from the Greek root homos, meaning "same," and genos, meaning "kind." In social justice conversations, this signifies like-minded thinking and/or paradigms within groups, such as: religion, racial identity, class, gender, etc.^{xxii}

Implicit Bias

The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.^{xxiii}

Inclusion

A culture that fosters diversity, equity, support, and respect within every facet of organizational services and activities.^{xxiv}

Inequality

Inequity refers to the phenomenon of unequal and/or unjust distribution of resources and opportunities among members of a given society.^{xxv}

Inequity

Inequity refers to a lack of equity, which means "justice" or "fairness." Where there's inequity in a community, it means injustice, unfairness, and bias are being perpetuated. That might sound exactly like inequality, but inequities are what cause inequality.^{xxvi}

Ism

The version of "-ism" without the hyphen actually is a noun meaning 'a distinctive doctrine, cause, or theory' or

‘an oppressive and especially discriminatory attitude or belief’. As a noun suffix, *ism* is prejudice or discrimination on the basis of a (specified) attribute.^{xxvii} In DEI context, *ism* is a systemic dynamic of oppression and marginalization.

Institutional Racism

The systematic distribution of resources, power, and opportunity in our society to the benefit of people who are white and the exclusion of people of color expressed in the practice of social, economic, and political institutions rather than by individuals.^{xxviii}

Intersectionality

Overlapping social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination and their complex and cumulative effects.^{xxix}

LGBTQIA+

Acronym that groups lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex and asexual individuals into one group based on their common experience as targets of heterosexism and transphobia and their common, yet complex, struggle for sexual and gender freedom. This term is generally considered a more inclusive and affirming descriptor than the more limited “gay” or the outdated “homosexual. We acknowledge that there is a spectrum of genders and sexualities and similarly a spectrum of terms that acknowledge the continuum identities. The ‘+’ is meant to represent the multitude of other identities one could use to identify that would not be able to fit into one abbreviation.^{xxx}

Marginalize

To relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group.^{xxxi}

Marginalized Populations

Groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions.

The subjugation and marginalization of specific groups of people within a country or society over time such as: girls and women, racial and ethnic communities, religious minorities, people in poverty, LGBTI people, race, ethnicity, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, genetic information, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political beliefs or ability and many more.^{xxxii}

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to marginalized persons based solely upon their group membership.^{xxxiii}

Neurodiversity

The range of differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits, regarded as part of the variation in the human population (used especially in the context of autism spectrum disorders).^{xxxiv} It is important to note that not everyone in the autism community prefers the term. This is a push to move away from this idea of pathology and more toward a more nuanced perspective with variations of what is “normal.”^{xxxv}

Oppression

Inhuman or degrading treatment of individuals or groups; hardship and injustice brought about by the dominance of one group over another; the negative and demeaning exercise of power.^{xxxvi}

Plain Language

Writing style is clear, concise, organized, and jargon-free to help people understand information.^{xxxvii}

Prejudice

A preconceived judgment or opinion, usually based on limited information.^{xxxviii}

Privilege

Privilege is understood to be those rights, benefits and advantages enjoyed by a person or body of persons beyond the advantages of other individuals. Majority group refers to the largest group, while a minority group is a group with fewer members represented in the social system.^{xxxix}

Race Equity

The condition where one's racial identity has no influence on how one fares in society. An inclusive approach to transform structures toward access, justice, self-determination, redistribution, and the sharing of power and resources.^{xl}

Race Prejudice

Prejudice against or hostility toward people of another race or color or of a different culture.^{xli}

Racial Microaggressions

Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.^{xlii}

Racism

A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what we call race), that unfairly disadvantages racial and ethnic communities, and unfairly advantages [white] communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources.^{xliii}

Sexism

Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender. It can lead to a wide range of harmful behaviors, from acts of violence to subtle comments that reinforce stereotypes.^{xliv}

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation means actual or imputed heterosexuality, homosexuality, or bisexuality.^{xlv}

Social Determinants of Health/Equity

The economic and social conditions and systems that influence the health of individuals and communities. The conditions and systems in/under which people are born, grow, live, work and age, that influence the health and well-being of individuals and communities. Examples include: race/ethnicity, racism/discrimination, social connection and safety, access to reliable transportation, water quality, quality education, criminal justice, safe and affordable housing, job security, availability of nutritious food, etc.^{xlvi}

Social Equity

Equity is the full and equal access to opportunities, power and resources necessary for all people achieve their full potential and thrive. The fair, just and equitable distribution of public services and implementation of public policy.^{xlvii}

Social Justice

The absence of unfair, unjust advantage or privilege based on race, class, gender, or other forms of difference.^{xlviii}

Stereotypes

Blanket beliefs and expectations about members of certain groups that present an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment. They go beyond necessary and useful categorizations and generalizations in that they are typically negative, are based on little information, and are highly generalized.^{xlix}

Stigma

Stigma is discrimination against an identifiable group of people, a place, or a nation.^l

Systemic Inequities

Unequal outcomes resulting from characteristics built into a system that produce inequality based on race, racial and ethnic communities, ethnicity, sex, ability, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, genetic information, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political beliefs and other factors. Systemic inequities are revealed through a systems analysis of root causes such as social determinants and institutional policies and practices, which may or may not involve individual bias.^{li}

Systemic Racism

Race prejudice plus misuse of power by and between systems equals racism.^{lii}

White Privilege

The collection of benefits that white people receive in a racially structured society in which they are at the top of the racial hierarchy. White privilege denotes both obvious and less obvious passive advantages that white people may not recognize they have, which distinguishes it from overt bias or prejudice. These include cultural affirmations of one's own worth; presumed greater social status; and freedom to move, buy, work, play, and speak freely.^{liii}

White Supremacy

A term used to characterize various belief systems central to which are one or more of the following key tenets: 1) whites should have dominance over people of other backgrounds, especially where they may co-exist; 2) whites should live by themselves in a whites-only society; 3) white people have their own "culture" that is superior to other cultures; 4) white people are genetically superior to other people. As a full-fledged ideology, white supremacy is far more encompassing than simple racism or bigotry.^{liv}

Xenophobia

Supremacy the excessive fear, dislike, and even hostility toward of anything "foreign" or to anything and anybody from outside one's own social group, nation, or country.^{lv}

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