

# Glossary of Terms and Guiding Definitions

This document was created to help Washington County Health and Human Services staff understand and use common terms when discussing diversity, equity, and inclusion. It provides helpful terms and definitions to assist staff in learning more and moving towards action.

## Affinity Group:

Affinity Groups are voluntary, employee-driven groups organized around shared interests and consisting of individuals who identify with others similar to themselves. This may include: race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, veterans, refugees and immigrants.

## Ally:

Someone who supports a group other than one's own (in terms of racial identity, gender, faith identity, sexual orientation, etc.). Allies acknowledge disadvantage and oppression of other groups than their own; take risks and supportive action on their behalf; commit to reducing their own complicity or collusion in oppression of those groups and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression.

## Cultural Humility:

Cultural humility is a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and the ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the person. Cultural humility is different from other culturally-based training ideals because it focuses on self-humility rather than achieving a state of knowledge or awareness.

## Diversity:

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that we engage in service to the community. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, gender – the groups that most often come to mind when “diversity” is used – but also gender identity, age, national origin, religion, mental or physical ability, learning styles, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas and perspectives.

## Equality:

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. Equality recognizes that historically certain groups of people have experienced discrimination based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, gender and sexual orientation.

## Equity:

Equity means striving to identify and eliminate visible and invisible barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups. An equitable outcome ensures that everyone has the resources they need to succeed. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept.

### EQUALITY VS. EQUITY

**Equality** is providing the same thing to all people regardless of their need, and only works if everyone starts from the same place. Whereas **equity** focuses on the need of an individual, which actively moves everyone closer to success.

## Gender:

Gender is the complex interrelationship between an individual's sex (gender biology), one's internal sense of self as male, female, both or neither (gender identity) as well as one's outward presentations and behaviors (gender expression) related to that perception, including their gender role. Together, the intersection of these three dimensions produce one's authentic sense of gender, both in how people experience their own gender as well as how others perceive it.

## Health Disparities:

A particular type of health difference that is 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.

## Health Equity:

Health equity is achieved when all people can reach their full potential and are not disadvantaged by social or economic class, race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, or socially determined circumstance. Optimal health depends on mitigating or eliminating avoidable inequities in the access to and utilization of resources and opportunities. Health equity demands intentionally and systematically addressing poor health outcomes by purposefully engaging the root and intersectional causes of adverse health status such as racism, structural disadvantage and differential privilege.

## Health Inequities:

Differences in health status and mortality rates across population groups that are systemic, avoidable, unfair, and unjust. These differences are rooted in social and economic injustice, and are attributable to social, economic and environmental conditions in which people live, work, and play.

## Implicit Bias:

Implicit bias is learned stereotypes and prejudices that operate automatically, and unconsciously, when interacting with others. Also referred to as unconscious bias. When a person's actions or decisions are at odds with their intentions this is implicit bias.

## Inclusion:

Inclusion is the degree to which diverse individuals are able to participate fully in the decision-making process within an organization or group. While a truly "inclusive" group is necessarily diverse, a "diverse" group may or may not be inclusive. Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued. Through our active, intentional, authentic and ongoing engagement with diversity — in people, policies, County services and in our communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) — we can more effectively leverage our resources to advance our collective capabilities.

## Intersectionality:

Intersectionality is a methodology of studying the relationships among multiple dimensions of social relationships and subject formations. Suggesting that, and seeking to examine how, various socially and culturally constructed categories such as gender, race, class, disability, etc. interact on multiple and often

simultaneous levels, contributing to systemic social inequality that reflects the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination and privilege.

### Marginalized Communities:

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

### Microaggression:

Everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

### Minority:

Any group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment. Being a numerical minority is not a characteristic of being a minority group; sometimes larger groups can be considered minority groups due to their lack of power.

### Oppression:

Oppression is a pervasive system of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within the individual consciousness. This term encapsulates the blend of institutional and systematic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that shade most aspects of life in society; it is rooted in an imbalance of power; and it is part of the national consciousness.

### People of Color:

A political construct created to describe people who would generally not be categorized as white by people of color themselves. For example, people who identify as African American, Latino/a/x, Asian American, mixed race, or Native American may also identify as people of color (sometimes abbreviated as POC). This term is often preferred over “minority” or non-white.

### Privilege and White Privilege:

Advantages and immunities enjoyed by one, usually powerful group or class, especially to the disadvantage of others. Systemic advantages that are granted based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or other dimensions of diversity, regardless of an individual’s personal effort and often invisible to those who have it because they are taught not to see it. White privilege: Is the advantages and immunities enjoyed by whites in the United States. The unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits, and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. White people who experience such privilege do so consciously or unconsciously.

## Racism:

A system of advantage based on a socially constructed concept of race, created to justify social, political, and economic hierarchy.

### Internalized Racism:

The situation that occurs in a racist system when a racial group oppressed by racism supports the supremacy and dominance of the dominating group by maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures and ideologies that undergird the dominating group's power. It involves at least four essential and interconnected elements: decision-making, resources, standards, naming the problem.

### Interpersonal Racism:

Racism that occurs between individuals. It is the holding of negative attitudes towards a different race or culture. Interpersonal racism often follows a victim/perpetrator model.

### Institutional Racism:

Institutional racism includes policies, practices and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.

### Structural Racism:

Structural racism encompasses a history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color. Structural racism is racial bias among interlocking institutions and across society, causing cumulative and compounding effects that systematically advantage white people and disadvantage people of color. The structural level of racism refers to the history, culture, ideology, and interactions of institutions and policies that work together to perpetuate inequity.

## White:

A social and political, rather than biological, construct for a racial category used to describe people with light skin, generally of European descent.

## Resources:

1. Bivens, Donna. 1995. Internalized Racism: A Definition, Women's Theological Center.
2. Racial Equity Alliance. 2015. GARE Resource Guide.
3. Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center. 2016. "Glossary of Terms".
4. Tervalon M, Murray-Garcia J. Cultural humility versus cultural competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. *J Health Care Poor Under- served*. 1998 May;9(2):117–125.
5. Vermont Department of Health. 2019. "Health Equity Glossary".
6. Washington County Diversity Equity and Inclusion Think Tank. 2019.
7. Healthy People 2020.