

Strategies for Diversifying Your Healthcare Workforce: A Tool for Healthcare Providers

New Hampshire's population is becoming more diverse and the state's healthcare workforce is not keeping pace with this trend. A workforce reflective of the patient population results in improved access to care, patient satisfaction, patient-provider communication, and health outcomes. **All providers and patients benefit from a culturally effective, diverse environment focused on delivering high quality care.** There are economic benefits as well; diversity improves business performance and competitiveness, reduces interpretation costs, decreases the cost of care, and stimulates medical and public health innovations. This locally developed tool based on national best practices is a resource for your organization to **increase the proportion of underrepresented racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities among health professionals** in your workforce and maximize the human capital our state has to offer.

Area	Strategy
1 <i>Know Your Community and Your Workforce</i>	1 Collect demographic information on your community
	2 Collect Race, Ethnicity and Language (REaL) data on your patient population
	3 Collect Race, Ethnicity and Language (REaL) data on your workforce
	4 Translate brochures and informational materials
2 <i>Recruitment</i>	1 Support early intervention and pipeline programs
	2 Implement targeted, innovative recruitment campaigns to increase visibility of job openings
	3 Establish partnerships with health profession training programs
	4 Create appropriate marketing materials
	5 Make Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies and commitment to diversity explicit
	6 Consider adding alternative hiring criteria
3 <i>Retention</i>	1 Create flexible scheduling options
	2 Offer training and professional development opportunities that foster self-efficacy
	3 Encourage social support networks and mentoring
	4 Offer culturally-appropriate supervision and mentorship
4 <i>Career Development and Advancement</i>	1 Establish articulation agreements and career ladders
	2 Provide tuition reimbursement or opportunities for work-study to encourage advancement
	3 Publicize your organization's workforce development strategy
5 <i>Create a Climate of Inclusion</i>	1 Offer diversity programming and cultural competency training
	2 Identify and publicize the benefits of diversity for business
	3 Offer professional development
6 <i>Policies and Procedures</i>	1 Conduct an assessment to analyze your institution's current policies and practices
	2 Develop a Diversity Plan
	3 Align diversity with organizational strategies
	4 Seek and publicize commitment from senior management
	5 Establish a diversity structure
	6 Create a system for organizational accountability
	7 Partner with other sectors

Area 1: Know Your Community and Your Workforce

1. Collect demographic information on your community

Description

Collect data about the current and projected demographics of the community you serve, and identify trends to plan for the future.

Rationale

The United States is becoming increasingly diverse, and minorities are underrepresented in many health professions. A workforce reflective of the patient population reduces health disparities.^{1, 2, 3}

2. Collect Race, Ethnicity and Language (REaL) data on your patient population

Description

Collect REaL data on your patient population in compliance with standards from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Integrate questions into your Electronic Medical Records and other information management systems and periodically update them to ensure compliance.

Rationale

Collecting and analyzing data on the race, ethnicity and primary language of your patient population allows you to identify health disparities and provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care.²

3. Collect Race, Ethnicity and Language (REaL) data on your workforce

Description

Analyze your workforce to see if minorities are represented across all levels of your organization, and identify areas for improvement.

Rationale

Minorities in leadership positions act as role models for newer professionals. A workforce reflective of the patient population (in all occupations) reduces health disparities.^{1, 3, 4, 5, 13}

4. Translate brochures and informational materials

Description

Offer information in top languages in region and in languages of target communities.

Rationale

Marketing materials, including employment notices offered in a range of languages will increase visibility of your organization in diverse communities. By involving community members in this process, you can ensure that you are providing culturally relevant messages and information.^{3, 4}

Area 2: Recruitment

1. Support early intervention and pipeline programs

Description

Partner with early intervention and pipeline programs that target students in middle and secondary school. Support and strengthen the education of diverse K-12 students and increase their knowledge of healthcare at an early age. Support post-secondary programs that guide students to academic excellence and provide pre-professional exposure to health professions.

Rationale

These programs boost the number of racial and ethnic minorities entering the pipeline of well-educated future healthcare workers. At present, racial and ethnic minorities on average receive lower quality education, score lower on tests, and are less likely to graduate from High School.^{1, 4, 5}

2. Implement targeted, innovative recruitment campaigns that utilize non-traditional sources and increase visibility of job openings

Description

Network with minority community, professional and social groups or organizations, churches and other religious groups, minority fraternities and sororities, minority alumni, minority mailing lists, paraprofessional pools, and graduates from community, junior and technical colleges.

Rationale

Standard recruitment practices may target social and professional networks where minorities are underrepresented, reducing the likelihood of attracting qualified candidates from a range of backgrounds. Targeted, innovative recruitment disseminates information about jobs to a wider audience, increasing your pool of applicants.⁴

3. Establish partnerships with health profession training programs

Description

Meet regularly with health profession training programs to discuss your workforce needs, including plans to diversify the workforce over time.

Rationale

Employer-educator partnerships are more likely to effectively prepare students to deliver the skills required in the workforce, and foster long-term change in educational settings to train a diverse workforce.⁶

4. Create appropriate marketing materials

Description

Depict minority individuals as successful professionals in all healthcare occupations, especially in senior leadership positions, in marketing materials.

Rationale

Businesses may print marketing materials reflecting their current workforce (with minorities often underrepresented). A more effective approach is to reflect the diverse workforce that your organization aspires to develop.⁴

5. Make Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies and commitment to diversity explicit

Description

Include EEO language in job postings, and discuss your organization's commitment to developing a diverse workforce with all applicants as part of the standard interview process.

Rationale

When you make an explicit commitment in writing, early in the hiring process, you demonstrate that workforce diversity is a priority for your organization, which fosters an inclusive environment.^{7,8}

6. Consider adding alternative hiring criteria

Description

Supplement standard hiring criteria with measures of skills learned outside academic settings such as positive self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, ability to deal with racism, leadership experience, and community service. Prioritize linguistic/cultural knowledge if it fills an unmet need in your patient population.

Rationale

Traditional hiring criteria tend to measure cognitive variables and social skills based on the dominant culture, which may be inadequate indicators of minority professional accomplishments or performance, and may not reflect your organization's specialized workforce needs.^{4,9}

Area 3: Retention

1. Create flexible scheduling options

Description

Provide opportunities for employees to work while also maintaining family commitments.

Rationale

Diverse employees may have extended family networks and responsibilities and may place a high priority on family or other outside commitments. Providing flexible options allows employees to achieve a positive work/life balance and maintain increased focus while on the job.⁵

2. Offer training and professional development opportunities that foster self-efficacy

Description

Professional development opportunities can foster self-efficacy, which is mediated by a person's beliefs or expectations about his/her capacity to accomplish certain tasks successfully or demonstrate certain behaviors.

Rationale

Due to conscious or subconscious prejudice, some individuals may think minority professionals are less capable. Discrimination can cause internalized self-doubt, powerlessness, or self- invalidation. Increased self-efficacy contributes to greater teamwork and collective potential.^{4,10}

3. Encourage social support networks and mentoring

Description

Encourage social and cultural activities such as peer groups, peer support meetings, or mentoring programs that reduce social isolation, foster social integration, promote self-pride and confidence, and build networks. Make employees aware of programs available to them in the community.

Rationale

Lack of diversity at the workplace, social isolation, or a hostile environment can increase employee attrition.^{4,9,11,12}

4. Offer culturally appropriate supervision and mentorship

Description

Identify supervisors or mentors committed to working with minority professionals to maintain strong relationships, listen to challenges, problem-solve, and foster career advancement.

Rationale

Racially hostile or unsupportive work environments will cause diverse employees to seek out support elsewhere. Identifying a positive supervisor or mentor within the organization strengthens relationships at work and encourages continuous development of your workforce.^{4,5}

Area 4: Career Development and Advancement

1. Establish articulation agreements and career ladders

Description

Establish articulation agreements between 2-yr colleges, paraprofessional associations, business associations, employers, and 4-yr universities to clarify opportunities for advancement.

Rationale

Minorities have historically been overrepresented in 2-yr schools and paraprofessional jobs compared to 4-yr universities and professional occupations. New agreements are required to encourage advancement and establish career ladders.^{4,6,13}

2. Provide tuition reimbursement or opportunities for work-study to encourage advancement

Description

Continued financial aid for higher levels of education and training, including work-study, allows students to focus on advancing their career while reducing financial stress.

Rationale

Many workers aspire to advance, but few can afford to study full-time without working. You can support career advancement and retain workers by offering tuition reimbursement or work-study.^{4,5,14}

3. Publicize your organization's workforce development strategy

Description

Make all employees equally aware of formal procedures for advancement/promotion, distribution of assignments, and opportunities for career development/advancement.

Rationale

Discrimination is common within hiring and promotion. Managers and HR professionals must intentionally create equitable systems and transparent policies so that unequal promotions or opportunities for advancement do not persist.^{16,17}

Area 5: Creating a Climate of Inclusion

1. Offer diversity programming and cultural competency training

Description

Build a pluralistic environment by promoting diversity and multiculturalism through special programming and activities for all employees that address personal biases and organizational climate.

Rationale

Majority employees and managers cannot always recognize a racially hostile or unsupportive climate. All staff members, including those at the highest levels of the organization, should examine their own biases and work together to create a climate of inclusion.^{10,14,15}

2. Identify and publicize the benefits of diversity for business

Description

Frame diversity as an asset rather than a burden to your organization and teach people about the benefits for your business.

Rationale

A diverse workforce results in improved access to care, patient satisfaction, patient-provider communication, and competition (the U.S. minority marketplace is equal to the GNP of Canada).^{1,6,10}

3. Offer professional development

Description

Provide ongoing, mandatory professional development to staff.

Rationale

Staff members are more likely to implement new diversity strategies if offered ongoing support. Discriminatory systems take time to change.^{10, 18}

Area 6: Policies and Procedures

1. Conduct an assessment to analyze your institution's current policies and practices and identify areas for improvement

Description

Assess the status and effectiveness of current strategies for inclusion, including compliance with mandates and guidelines set by the Federal government, the Joint Commission, the National Committee for Quality Assurance, and others.

Rationale

Assessments can help you to identify areas in which your organization excels and areas that are in need of improvement. Managers can then make strategic decisions about next steps.^{3,9,15}

2. Develop a Diversity Plan**Description**

Based on the results of the assessment, create a Diversity Plan addressing goals, policies, practices, strategies, management accountability and oversight, expected outcomes, and evaluation.

Rationale

A Diversity Plan acts as a roadmap for organizations to actively improve policies and practices regarding diversity, and outlines the steps your organization is taking to comply with federal mandates and guidelines.^{3,8,15}

3. Align diversity with organizational strategies**Description**

Link diversity to your organization's mission, incorporate it into your overall strategic plan, and integrate it into concepts of quality improvement and business outcomes rather than addressing it separately.

Rationale

A systems change approach (rather than an isolated diversity program) is necessary to dismantle racism and discrimination present in policies, procedures and practices. The analytical framework should align with business objectives.^{15,18,19}

4. Seek and publicize commitment from senior management**Description**

Ask senior management to demonstrate a commitment to educating, promoting and advancing minorities, and expect all staff to promote this value within the organization.

Rationale

Organizations that embed diversity values in their management structure and demonstrate commitment from the top show better effects from other diversity initiatives overall.

5. Establish a diversity structure**Description**

Establish a diversity committee and/or appoint a staff member to lead the implementation of new strategies. Commit resources to stated goals.

Rationale

Organizations that assign compliance to a manager or change team, and commit resources so the team can implement necessary steps, are most effective in implementing new diversity programs and policies.^{8,15}

6. Create a system for organizational accountability**Description**

Create a system that includes ongoing monitoring or auditing, and assigns rewards and penalties based on the extent to which departments/divisions have implemented best practices.

Rationale

Commitment to change requires consistent implementation throughout the different and departments/divisions. Rewards and penalties can motivate members of your organization to comply with internal changes.^{4,5,8,15,18}

7. Partner with other sectors

Description

Form a state collaborative for workforce diversity in healthcare with employers, educators, service providers, professional associations, and minority-led organizations.

Rationale

The Joint Center of Political and Economic Studies' Sullivan Alliance to Transform America's Health Professions recommends forming state collaboratives (14 states currently have alliances).²⁰

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Summary

This issue brief outlines strategies for healthcare organizations to increase the proportion of underrepresented racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities among health professionals in their workforce. Strategies are organized into 6 key areas: 1) Know Your Community and Your Workforce; 2) Recruitment; 3) Retention; 4) Career Development and Advancement; 5) Create a Climate of Inclusion; and 6) Policies and Procedures

Implementing such strategies will result in benefits to the state's workforce, patients from all backgrounds, and healthcare organizations. Additional information and support is available through the NH Health & Equity Partnership.

CLAS Standard 2*:

Health care organizations should implement strategies to recruit, retain, and promote at all levels of the organization a diverse staff and leadership that are representative of the demographic characteristics of the service area.

<http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=15>

*The National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) are guidelines recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health for adoption as mandates by Federal, State, and national accrediting agencies.

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& the Institute on Assets and Social Policy (IASP) at Brandeis University.*



**New Hampshire
Health & Equity Partnership**

IASP

Institute on Assets
and Social Policy

The New Hampshire Health & Equity Partnership is a public-private coalition of individuals and organizations whose vision is for everyone in New Hampshire to have a fair opportunity to live a long, healthy life.

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