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Equity in Action: Leveraging SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance to Improve Systems

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) SOAR Technical Assistance Center

Policy Research Associates, Inc.

March 24, 2022

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Disclaimer

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Purpose and Objectives

- Learn about work being done at the SAMSHA SOAR TA Center, SAMHSA Homeless and Housing Resource Center (HHRC), and in community organizations to address the barriers to equity in SOAR implementation and housing/homelessness service delivery.

- Hear from experts and service providers on what equity means and why Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) consideration is an important step to ensure equitable service delivery.

- Learn how providers use the products and tools developed by SAMHSA to reduce the gaps that may contribute to disparities in how homeless services are accessed and delivered within your agency and community.

- Share views on what equity means to participants and their organizations.

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Agenda

Presenters

- Dazara Ware, MPC, Assistant Director, SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, Policy Research Associates, Inc., Delmar, New York

- Kevin A. James, LPC, Project Associate II, SAMHSA's Homeless and Housing Resource Center (HHRC), Policy Research, Inc., Delmar, New York

- Josh Johnson, Director of Training and Equitable Practice, Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO), Columbus, Ohio

- Caroline Bolas, Director of the SOAR Initiative and SOAR State Lead, Baltimore, Maryland

- Kascadare Causeya, MBA, Program Manager for BEST/Central City Concern, Portland, Oregon

- Program Participant, Central City Concern, Portland, Oregon

Questions and Answers

- Facilitated by the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center

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Welcome!

Asha Stanly, MSW, LICSW

Government Project Officer

Division of State and Community Systems Development

Center for Mental Health Services

SAMHSA SOAR TA Center

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SAMHSA SOAR TA Center: Overview of DEI Tools and Resources

Dazara Ware, MPC

Assistant Director

SAMHSA SOAR TA Center

Policy Research Associates, Inc.

Delmar, New York

March 24, 2022

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- Improving conversations with Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) staff

- Addressing inequity to strengthen workplace support and safety

- Extending this to the people we serve

Hiring and Supervising SOAR Caseworkers: Toolkit

- Recruiting for highly skilled positions

- Interviewing for DEI experience

- Ensuring pay equity

- Supervising SOAR case worker positions

Identifying Applicants: DEI Considerations

Reducing Implicit Bias and DEI Considerations for Identifying SOAR Applicants

- Overarching questions
- Information to consider that may be linked to the applicant's racial, ethnic, or cultural identity

- # Reducing implicit bias
  - ## Race
  - ## Gender
  - ## Sexual orientation
- # Legal History
- # History of Trauma

MSR Interview Guide and Template

SOAR WORKS

Medical Summary Report Interview Guide and Template

The **Medical Summary Report (MSR) Interview Guide** provides sample questions and guidance for gathering information necessary to the SSI/SSDI disability determination process. We do not expect you to ask all the questions in each section. The questions are intended to help you gather all the information you will need to write a Medical Summary Report. For example, if the individual has not been in military service, there is no need to include a military history section. Likewise, if the individual has no legal issues, do not include a legal history section.

Using this guidance, SOAR-trained providers are able to gather a thorough history in a respectful manner, which in turn helps the Disability Determination Services (DDS) understand the duration of a person's impairment and the effect of their illness(es) on work ability and functioning. The **MSR Template** may be used to compile information in the form of a narrative letter to SSA/DDS as part of the SOAR process. The template has eight main sections, covering the types of information that DDS needs to make a decision. Use the headings provided in the template to organize your MSR.

Using Trauma Informed Interviewing to Reduce Implicit Bias
The SAMSHA SOAR TA Center is working to reduce the influence of implicit bias and encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) during the information gathering process for the Medical Summary Report. This guidance asks you to consider how a potential applicant's racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds may impact their perceptions regarding their disabilities, diagnoses, symptoms, and treatment and to be mindful of how this may impact your opinions/feelings/attitudes towards the client's functioning. The interviewing process can uncover very sensitive topics such as past and current trauma, thus it is important to be sensitive to influences that affect a person's willingness and ability to provide information. How questions are asked during this process can be critical to obtaining the appropriate information.

The overarching question you should be asking yourself is: Does asking this information help provide insight into the applicant's functioning? Is the question being asked in a way that conveys a sense of care and non-judgement?

- Using Trauma Informed Interviewing to Reduce Implicit Bias

- New Notes:
  - Information to Consider
  - Relevant Evidence for Inclusion

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SOAR Referral Process Toolkit

- ## Resource for developing a community referral workflow

- ## Separate tracking spreadsheet

- ## Analyze referral acceptance data for racial equity

SAMHSA's Homeless and Housing Resource Center (HHRC)

Kevin James, LPC-A

Project Associate II

SAMHSA's Homeless and Housing Resource Center (HHRC)
Policy Research, Inc. Delmar, New York

March 24, 2022

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Mission and Vision

- **Mission:** HHRC provides training on housing and treatment models focused on adults, children, and families who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have serious mental illness and/or serious emotional disturbance, substance use disorders, and/or co-occurring disorders.

- **Vision:** Become a central hub of easily accessible, no-cost training for health and housing professionals in evidence-based practices that contributes to housing stability, recovery, and an end to homelessness.

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SAMHSA Partnerships

PRI — POLICY RESEARCH, INC.

- SAMHSA Homeless and Housing Resource Center

- Connection with SAMHSA TTC Leadership and Centers of Excellence

PRA — POLICY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

- SAMHSA SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) TA Center

- SAMHSA GAINS Center for Behavioral Health and Justice Transformation

- SAMHSA Service Members, Veterans, and their Families TA Center

HHRC — HOMELESS AND HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER

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HHRC DEI Goals

- **Goal:** Expand access to HHRC resources via Spanish translation, American Sign Language interpretation, and live captioning.

- **Goal:** Promote culturally and linguistically appropriate evidence-based practices and emerging trends in the housing and homelessness sector.

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HHRC DEI Goals

- **Goal:** Foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive HHRC Community.

- **Goal:** Elevate the voices of persons with lived experience (PLE) of homelessness and recovery.

  - Conduct focus groups with service providers and PLE to incorporate feedback into HHRC products.
  - Compensate PLE as Consultants for participating in focus groups and webinars.

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HHRC DEI in Action

- Self-paced, no-cost, online courses – open to the public
  - Introduction to Housing Models, Housing Navigation, and Engagement
  - Upcoming courses include Introduction to Treatment Models, Whole-Person Care for Opioid Use Disorder, and Introduction to Mental Illness
- Webinars
  - American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation and live captioning
  - Recorded and posted with English and Spanish captions
  - Incorporate panelists with lived expertise

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HHRC DEI in Action

- Toolkits
  - Whole Person Care for People Experiencing Homelessness and Opioid Use Disorder
  - Applying New COVID-19 Related Funding to Address the Housing Needs of Individuals with SMI, SUD, COD
  - Helping Individuals Experiencing Homelessness Obtain Identification Documents

- Supportive Housing Learning Community
  - Three-part series for health and housing professionals

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HHRC Website

Filter   Clear All

5 results found

FOCUS

TOPIC

TYPE

CONTENT TYPE

LANGUAGE

☐ English (5)
☐ Spanish (3)

- hhrctraining.org

- Launched August 2021

- Need Help page available in English and Spanish

- Filter by language in Knowledge & Resource tab

- All webinars and training courses are available at no cost

Thank You!

SAMHSA's Homeless and Housing Resource Center provides high-quality, no-cost training for health and housing professionals in evidence-based practices that contributes to housing stability, recovery, and an end to homelessness.

Contact Us:

http://hhrctraining.org/ | info@hhrctraining.org | 518-439-7415x4

Equity in Action: Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO)

Joshua Johnson

Director of Training and Equitable Practice

Coalition On Homelessness and Housing In Ohio (COHHIO)

Columbus, Ohio

March 24, 2022

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COHHIO

- Overview of the programs and services administered to help solve homelessness in Ohio

- SOAR Ohio

- Racial Equity Committee

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*COHHIO has **not** solved Racism within the homeless system

Source: Spiske, M. (2020). *Rusty metal iron weathered sticker "caution" !* Photograph, Bayreuth, Deutschland.

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- "…We strive to utilize a progressive racial equity lens in providing ongoing and impactful trainings, technical assistance, data analysis, and program oversight in our work to eliminate homelessness and achieve safe, decent, and affordable housing for all…"

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- COHHIO's Racial Equity Committee (REC) is a response to the overwhelming need to address racial inequities in housing and homelessness
- Began In 2018
- Initially focused externally, now focused internally
  - Partnered with C4 Innovations for statewide training
  - Develops guidance/resources
  - Internal audits
  - Monthly Internal conversations/trainings
    - Including leadership and board
  - Homeless system focused

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R.E.A.C.H Ohio

We acknowledge that housing is a right and homelessness is unacceptable

R.E.A.C.H Ohio is committed to achieving racial equity in Ohio's homeless system

We are data-enlightened and person center

R.E.A.C.H Ohio's Mission

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R.E.A.C.H Ohio's Committees

Informational Committee

- Focus: Equity Training & Technical Assistance, and Data Analysis

Organizational Committee

- Focus: Equitable Service Delivery & Racially Equitable Decision Making

Systemic Committee

- Focus: Equitable Advocacy & Cross System Collaboration

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SOAR Tools in Action: Hiring and Staff Engagement

Source: SOAR Works Hiring-Supervising-SOAR-Case-Workers-Toolkit

SOAR Tools in Action: DEI Consideration

Source: Reducing Implicit Bias and DEI Considerations for Identifying SOAR Applicants

What We've Learned at COHHIO

Start internally

Don't assume anything

Continual self-work

Be intentional

Challenge and address white dominant culture

Talk is cheap

It's a marathon

Center equity

Practice Cultural Humility

Don't be afraid to try

Lean into discomfort

SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

Josh Johnson

JoshJohnson@cohhio.org

www.cohhio.org/programs/racialequity

www.cohhio.org/programs/soar-ohio

www.samhsa.gov

1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) ● 1-800-487-4889 (TDD)

Equity in Action: Maryland SOAR Initiative

Caroline Bolas

Consultant/Director: SOAR Initiative

Initiative of Maryland Department of Health Behavioral Health Administration

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Our commitment to providing equitable services via:

- Maryland Department of Health, Behavioral Health Administration Behavioral Health Equity Workgroup and Policy and Procedures Workgroup
- National SOAR TA Center Expert Panel Workgroup
- Maryland SOAR Equity Committee

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Questions to be Addressed

- Are SOAR Specialists receiving referrals representative of the communities we serve?
- Out of the referrals received, are there any differences based on race and ethnicity in terms of who is accepted as a SOAR applicant and who is not?
- Are there are any differences based on race and ethnicity in terms of approval and denial rates?

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- Data was collected on the race and ethnicity of all potential applicants referred to our community SOAR Specialists
- This data was analyzed at both state and county level
  - Firstly, looked at overall percentage of referrals in terms of race and ethnicity

Example of Data Analysis

Overall percentage of referrals by race - Statewide

	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Black/African American	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Multiple races	Unknown
%	0%	1%	44%	0%	43%	1%	12%
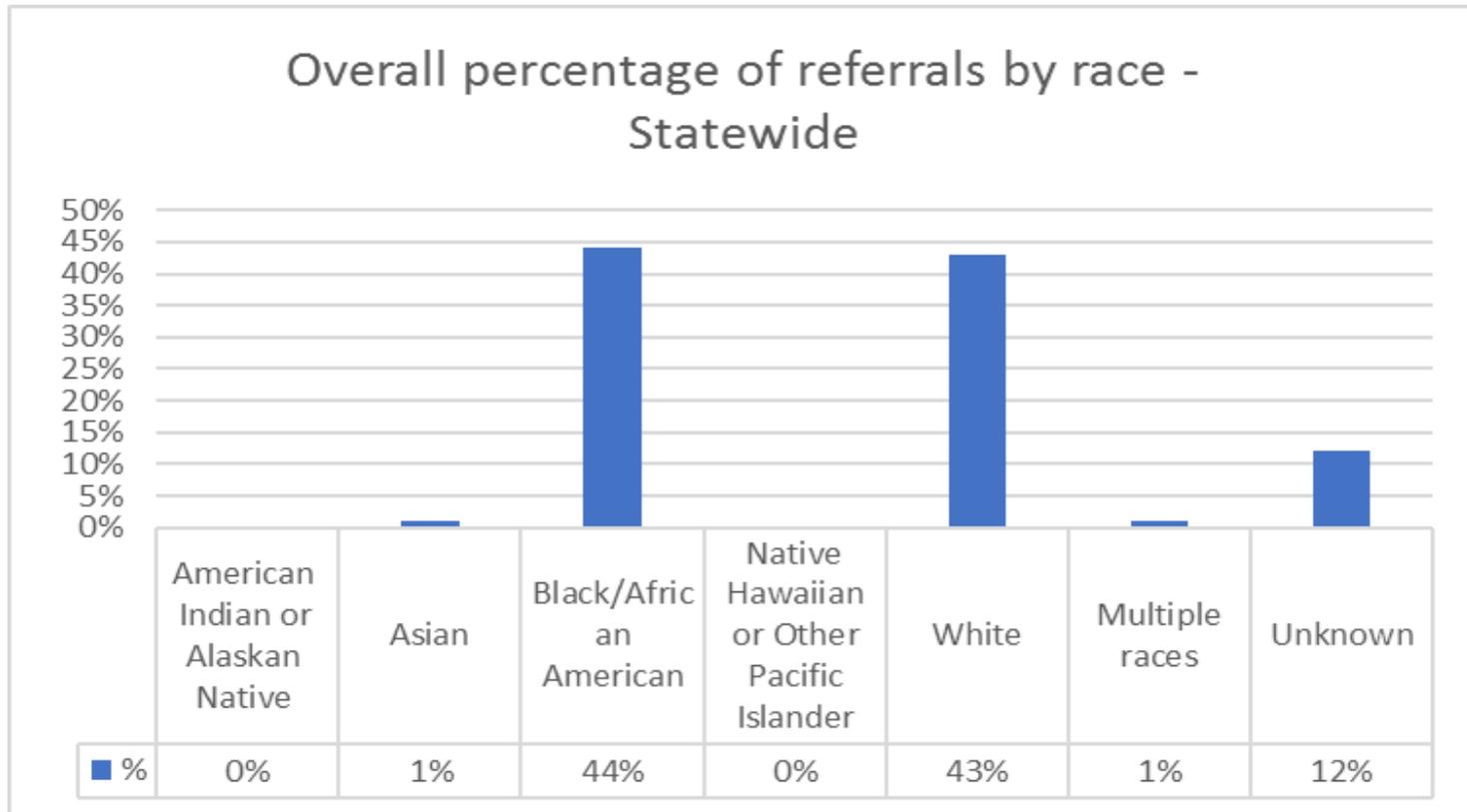
Multiple sources of comparison data used:

- Census data
- Data on individuals accessing mental health services from Maryland's Public Behavioral Health System
- Point in Time (PIT) data

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Action Steps

- Sharing county level data with local SOAR teams
- Developing community action plans
    - Seeking to develop more diverse community partnerships, including faith based
    - Distributing SOAR National TA center key SOAR documents that have been translated into Spanish
    - Seeking to employ more bi-lingual staff
    - Sharing SOAR data with existing equity committees in their local communities

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Question 2: Acceptance of Referrals

- Analyzed referral acceptance by race and ethnicity at state and local level
- Findings:
    - Out of the 155 referrals accepted, 50% identified as Black/African American and 46% as White
    - Out of the total 180 potential Black/African American applicants, 49% were accepted and 44% of the 176 potential White applicants were accepted
    - Out of the 155 referrals accepted, 95% identified as Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino
    - Out of the total 359 potential Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino applicants, 41% were accepted
    - 50% of all potential Hispanic/Latino applicants were accepted

Reasons Why Referrals Were Not Accepted

- Analyzed reasons given for not accepting a referral by race and ethnicity at state and local level

- Although a number of reasons were provided, the overall top reason (28%) given was: "Insufficient treatment history"
  - This did seem to impact more applicants of color than white applicants

Action Steps to Address Inequities:

- Sharing relevant SAMHSA SOAR TA Center documents such as "Identifying SOAR Applicants – DEI" and "Reducing Implicit Bias in the MSR"
- Arranging for Yvonne Perret, one of SOAR's founders, to work with our SOAR Specialists to help build case development skills

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- Discussed reasons for referral non-acceptance at county level and agreed upon local action plans including:
  - Educating referring providers about key SOAR eligibility criteria and when to refer
  - Adding to the referral form additional 3rd party contact information to help contact potential applicants

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Compared overall approval rate (85%) for all SOAR claims (initial and appeals) with rates broken down by race and ethnicity as follows:

- Black applicants – 89%
- White applicants – 80%
- All other racial groups – 100%
- Hispanic/Latino applicants – 83%
- Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino 86%

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Reasons for denials were analyzed:

- Only 28 denials in FY 21, data set is limited

- Look to build up data sets year on year

- Chief reason for denials for all races were:

  - Ability to do past or other work (Steps 4 and 5)

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Equity in Action: BEST/Central City Concern

Kascadare Causeya, MBA
Program Manager, BEST
Central City Concern, Portland, Oregon
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

March 24, 2022

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- Equity and Inclusion should not only be practiced from the top down, but also from the bottom up!

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- Leadership can make DEI more effective if/when they take a BOLD stance for it, and equally as bold a stance against those who are against it!

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Organizational Look

- Assess the current organizational DEI culture

- Identify indicators of success

- Focus on relevant topics for DEI training

- Incorporate small changes for a big impact

- Implement DEI initiatives at all levels within an organization

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Regardless of who is taking the stand, for it to be effective, it starts with each of us!

We/I have to take that stance!

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We have to take an inward look at ourselves,

We have to be thoughtful when it comes to making decisions!

We all have to be honest about what we find,

We have to be empathic,

We have to be open to change and differences,

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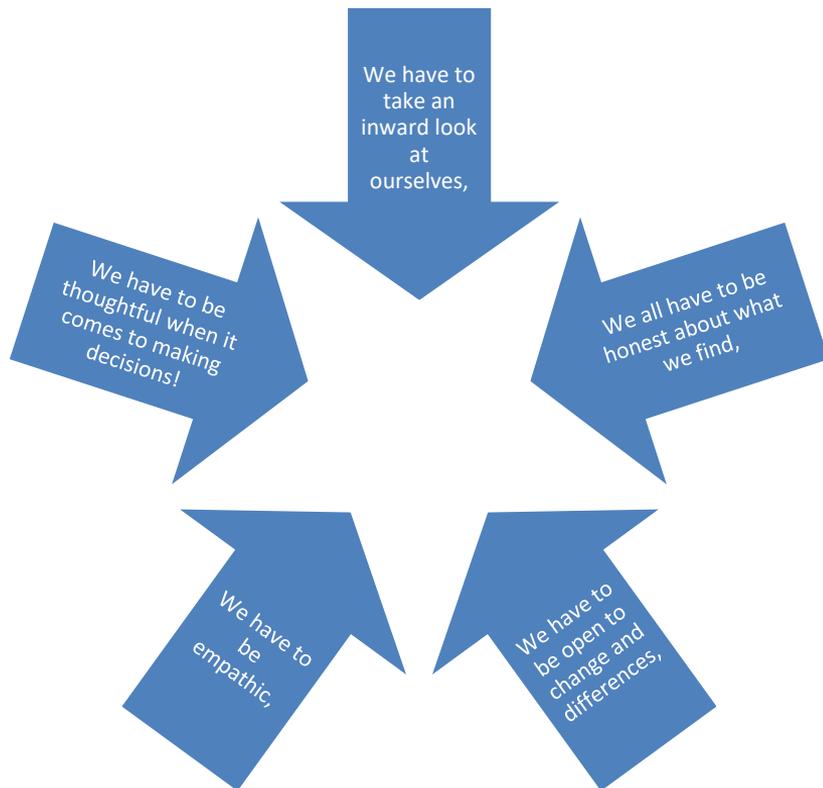
"Being honest with yourself requires self-awareness and even courage. It can sometimes be challenging to make contact with your truth, and even harder to take action based on that truth. Honesty is a little threatening because it's so powerful. It's also transformational."

Dr. Lisa Marie Bobby

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Cultural Diversity in the Workplace

13 Benefits and Challenges of Cultural Diversity in the Workplace

By: Katie Reynolds

https://www.hult.edu/blog/benefits-challenges-cultural-diversity-workplace/

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A Conversation with Dennis

A BEST Program Experience

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- What does equity mean to you?

- Answers will be compiled for sharing with the SOAR community

- Share your name, initials, or stay anonymous if you'd like!

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Questions and Answers

Please type your questions into the Q&A box.

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Resources

SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Equity

- https://www.samhsa.gov/behavioral-health-equity

DEI Resource Library

- https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/article/dei-resources

American Public Health Association: Advancing Racial Equity Webinar Series

- https://www.apha.org/events-and-meetings/webinars/racial-equity

National Alliance to End Homelessness: Racial Equity Resources

- https://endhomelessness.org/resource/racial-equity-resources/

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