

ODHS Equity Vision and North Star

The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) vision for equity is for everyone in Oregon to have dignity, respect and a full measure of human rights. On Oct. 19, 2020, ODHS adopted [the Equity North Star](#). This guides us toward our vision of an agency free of racism, discrimination and bias.

Purpose of the APD equity lens

The purpose of the equity lens is to promote:

- Consistency
- Accountability, and
- A shared understanding of the ODHS equity vision.

It moves beyond an understanding of equity. It serves as a tool to put ODHS equity values into use. It recognizes that it is important to acknowledge and address institutional and systemic barriers to cultivate an equitable system.

Through the equity lens, Aging and People with Disabilities (APD) aims to provide and create common criteria, language and protocols to determine the effect policies and rules set on people of various backgrounds. APD can also apply this lens to any work with the potential to disproportionately and adversely affect Oregon's diverse communities. APD needs to intentionally examine systemic policies and practices. This prevents and mitigates the perpetuation of disparities between groups that have been economically and socially marginalized. As APD applies the equity lens it ensures impacts on people and communities are considered early in all decision-making processes about rules, policies, budget, funding and more.

Core equity concepts

Language matters. The following concepts create a shared understanding of the words we use to describe the populations we serve. They acknowledge the role our structures and systems play in creating and sustaining disparities and

disproportionate outcomes. You may use these terms when writing reports, briefs and other documents.

Community voice: Members who represent the community served by the project, policy, or rule being involved in some or all co-constructing of:

- Design
- Implementation, or
- Strategic guidance in final decision-making.

Consumers representing diverse backgrounds: Taking into consideration consumers':

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Language
- Gender identity
- Nationality or immigration status
- Ability
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Rurality, and
- Religion.

Culturally responsive: Refers to recognition and incorporation of the cultural knowledge and experience of consumers served. This includes identifying and valuing:

- Consumer and community cultural assets
- Cultural perspectives and experiences, and
- Consumer needs outside of dominant values.

Culturally specific: Services that reflect a cultural community, delivered and led by staff who represent members of that community. Culturally specific organizations demonstrate:

- Intimate knowledge of the lived experience of the community

- The effect of structural and personal racism or discrimination on the community
- Knowledge of specific disparities, barriers or challenges documented in the community and how that influences the structure of the program or service
- Commitment to the community’s strength-based and self-driven thriving and resilience, and
- The ability to adapt services to communities, including:
 - Cultural practices
 - Health and safety beliefs and practices
 - Positive cultural identity and pride, and
 - Religious beliefs.

Disaggregated data: Data that is divided into detailed sub-categories, such as:

- Geographic region
- Race
- Ethnicity
- English fluency
- Disabilities
- Gender, and
- Socioeconomic status.

It can reveal inequalities and gaps between different sub-categories that aggregated data cannot. Disaggregated data may provide analysis of intersectional groups of two or more sub-categories, too. The accuracy and quality of data are dependent on data collection and analysis that may have biases toward the values of the dominant system. Therefore, it may require critical reflection on whether focal group issues are emerging through this data.

Disproportionate: Unequal or inequitable differences in access and outcomes that historical and current-day white supremacy created. What is “proportionate,” however, must also be analyzed and addressed in terms of:

- Values
- Intent, and
- Ideology.

Embedded racial inequality: Inequalities that are easily produced and reproduced, usually without intention or reference to race. These can be policies and practices that intentionally and unintentionally enable white privilege to be reinforced.

Equity: A state in which all people, regardless of identity or place, can achieve well-being.

Evidence-based: Forms of validation that do not just stem from dominant research. However, they include knowing, being and researching ways that are:

- Community-driven
- Indigenous
- Culturally responsive
- Sustaining and specific
- Non-dominant, and
- Non-Western.

Instructional practices, activities, strategies or interventions should not just use scientific evidence. The perspectives of those affected should also drive them.

Interested parties: Groups and persons invested in a shared goal, purpose, system, project or issue. While they should be engaged collaboratively, power and privilege dynamics often enter and members must address them.

“Direct interested parties” are those who work on the system, issue or project directly and regularly. “Indirect interested parties” are those affected and impacted by the system, issue, or project. Therefore, members are invested in the outcomes. It is critical to engage both groups. Use their names Instead of “interested parties,” use their names to recognize their unique identity.

Partnership: A group of organizations, Tribes, districts, or people who agree to work together with a common interest and shared vision. There is a high level of trust and intergroup communication. They address differences in power and privilege. Roles and responsibilities are well-defined and developed with shared

authority in decision-making. They may share space and staff. They may also put expectations and agreements in writing.

Race: A social – not biological – construct. We understand the term “race” to mean a racial or ethnic group generally recognized in society and often, by the government. When referring to people groups, we often use the terminology “people of color” or “communities of color” (or a name of the specific racial or ethnic group) and “white.”

Service equity: Programs, services and supports designed, improved, and provided to Oregonians through an understanding and acknowledgment of:

- Historic inequities
- Current disparities, and
- Individual experiences.

Systemic racism: The practices that perpetuate racial disparities and uphold white supremacy. It serves to the detriment and harm of persons of color and keeps them in negative cycles. Institutional or systemic racism also refers to policies that generate different outcomes for persons of different races. These laws, policies and practices are not necessarily explicit or mention any racial group. However, they work to create advantages for white people and disadvantages for people of color.

Underserved: Communities, groups, families, and consumers of the dominant system historically or currently excluded, impacted, marginalized, lacked services or refused service. This was or is due to institutionalized and intersectional racism and systemic oppression. These people include:

- People of color
- Tribal members
- English language learners
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing people
- The LGBTQIA2S+ community
- People experiencing and surviving poverty and homelessness
- People with disabilities, and/or different abilities

- People in rural communities.

Underrepresented: Refers to communities, groups, families and consumers excluded due to systemic barriers and intersectional oppression. These people include:

- People of color
- Tribal members
- English language learners
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing people
- The LGBTQIA2S+ community
- People experiencing and surviving poverty and homelessness
- People with disabilities, and/or different abilities
- People in rural communities.

White privilege: A term used to identify privileges, opportunities and gratuities offered by society to those who are white.

White supremacy: The idea that white people are superior to people of different racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds. It manifests as structural biases and disparities created and perpetuated by the dominant culture.

Questions for ensuring strategic and equitable practices

The APD Equity Lens was conceived as a tool and process for policy and rule developers. However, it has a broader utility for APD work. The questions below are designed for use in multiple contexts. For example, APD leaders can use them as a guide to make decisions about strategic investments and allocations. In addition, APD-commissioned boards and councils can use them to inform decision-making.

1. What does the policy, rule or work aim to accomplish?
2. Which specific communities are affected by the policy, rule, or work initiative?

3. Describe how the policy, rule or initiative meets the needs of consumers representing diverse backgrounds.
4. What are the potential unintentional consequences or social, political, emotional, economic, and other impacts of the policy, rule or work on the groups identified? Does the policy, rule or work ignore or worsen existing disparities? How can you minimize adverse impacts?
5. How does the policy, rule or initiative reflect ODHS equity goals concerning [diversity, inclusion and service equity](#)?
6. Given the potentially impacted populations you identified, will the policy, rule or work outputs be available in other languages or alternate formats? If so, which ones? If not, describe your rationale for not offering the policy, rule or work outputs in different languages or formats.
7. Describe your plan for communicating the new or modified policy, rule, or initiative to potentially affected communities.
8. Describe the data collection strategy to identify and track the impacts of the policy, rule or initiative on consumers who represent diverse backgrounds. What does success look like?

Reference

The APD Lens, including key concepts and questions, has been adapted from the Oregon Education Investment Board's Oregon Equity Lens. Available at <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/equityinitiatives/Documents/OregonEquityLens.pdf>