Advancing Cultural and Linguistic Competence, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: OPWDD-Georgetown University NCCC Partnership for Systems Change

Survey Results and Recommendations from 2024 Regional Provider Forums

Executive Summary

Submitted by Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence

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GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
National Center for Cultural Competence

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

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Executive Summary

Background and Context

The New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) is contracting with Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) to conduct a systems change project with a goal to: Advance policies and practices of cultural and linguistic competence, diversity, equity, and inclusion in all components of the intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) system of New York State. This partnership, Advancing Cultural and Linguistic Competence, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: OPWDD-Georgetown University NCCC Partnership for Systems Change (herein referred to as the Systems Change Project) began in October 2022.

One major effort of the Partnership was to convene virtual Regional Provider Forums that engaged the IDD provider network in a process to:

1. Define and differentiate cultural and linguistic competence, diversity, equity, and inclusion and what they mean for the IDD system of supports and services in New York State.
2. Assess the extent to which service providers have existing policies, practices, and resources for cultural and linguistic competence, diversity, equity, and inclusion.
3. Elicit input on the successes and challenges of implementing policies and practices that support cultural competence, linguistic competence, diversity, equity, and inclusion within their respective organizations.
4. Develop a report of findings and recommendations to strengthen capacity for cultural and linguistic competence, and equity within the provider network.

This report provides results and recommendations based on data collected from the Regional Provider Forums.

Methodology

The NCCC convened a total of 12 virtual provider forums from May – August 2024. Two virtual forums per Region (1-5) and one Multi-Regional forum were held from May 2, 2024 to May 10, 2024. Additionally, one makeup virtual forum was held on August 13, 2024 to accommodate those that were unable to attend any of the previous forums.

The audience for the provider forum was Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) or their staff who had the authority to speak on behalf of the organization. Providers were recruited through email and the Systems Change Project website to participate in the virtual forums. NCCC faculty and staff used Qualtrics, an online survey platform, for registration and consent. Providers who registered and consented received a Zoom link for their respective sessions based on their Region and their selected forum date.

During each session, providers were asked to answer 14 questions: 13 questions via Zoom polls and one question using ThoughtExchange. ThoughtExchange is a software platform that allows participants to anonymously share their responses to an open-ended question and rate the "thoughts" shared by others in the session. The questions assessed various aspects of an organization's commitment to cultural competence, linguistic competence, equity, diversity, and inclusion. The questions were presented to explore areas such as whether organizations have:

1. established definitions and frameworks for cultural competence and linguistic competence,
2. current action plans to implement practices for cultural competence and linguistic competence,
3. developed policies and structures to support cultural and linguistic competence,
4. the need for technical assistance (TA) and consultation,
5. allocated fiscal resources to advance cultural competence, linguistic competence, diversity, equity, and inclusion,
6. organizational capacity to evaluate the impact of these efforts,
7. barriers they face in advancing cultural and linguistic competence, and
8. established a definition and framework for advancing equity.

After each session, providers were invited to complete an evaluation form via Qualtrics. This report provides results and recommendations based on data collected from the Regional Provider Forums.

Demographics

There were 640 providers who registered for the forums. A total of 324 providers participated in the forums for a participation rate of 51%. A great survey response rate is generally considered to be anything above 30%; however, depending on the survey type and audience, a good response rate can range between 20% and 30%, with anything above 50% being considered exceptional. This summary highlights the results from the analysis of the demographic questions.

- The highest percentage of participants was from Region 4 (35%), followed by Region 3 (20%) and Region 1 (14%).
- 10% of forum participants represented multiregional provider organizations, and twelve percent of participants represented Region 2, while nine percent of participants represented Region 5.
- 43% of participants identified as "staff designated by the CEO to respond on behalf of a registered provider organization" or "CEO of a registered provider organization" (16%).
- Participants indicated that they have worked in their current role in their organization for "more than 6 years" (32%), followed by "5-6 years" (21%), and "1-2 years" (20%).
- The majority of participants (79%) indicated that their organizations provided supports and services through OPWDD for "more than 6 years."

- 96% of participants indicated that they were knowledgeable of their organization's policies and practices related to cultural competence, linguistic competence, equity, diversity, and inclusion for the population of persons with IDD and their families served and supported.
- The types of supports and services provided by the organizations were "community habilitation" (17%), "structured day programs" (15%), and "certified residential services" (14%).
- Participants self-identified by race and ethnicity as 49% "White (non-Hispanic)," 28% "Black or African American," and 6% "Asian." A total of 77% selected "non-Hispanic or Latino" and 23% identified as "Hispanic or Latino."

The greatest number of respondents to the polls and open-ended questions across all forums was 275. It should be noted that not all participants responded to polling and open-ended questions or stayed for the duration of the session. Therefore, the number of participants is higher than the greatest number of respondents to questions and polling, and the respondent counts are not the same for all questions. The next section presents the analysis and results from the polling and open-ended questions.

Analysis and Key Findings for Polling and Open-Ended Questions

The NCCC Research and Evaluation team conducted quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results from the Zoom polling and open-ended questions.

The results from the ten virtual forums convened on May 2 to May 10, 2024, highlighted various differences between Regions.

- Respondents from Region 1 (57%, n=23), Region 2 (72%, n=25), and Region 3 (65%, n=31) indicated that their organizations have developed and reached consensus on a framework and definition for cultural competence.
- Similarly, the majority of respondents from Region 1 (55%, n=22), Region 2 (57%, n=23), and Region 3 (52%, n=31) indicated that their organization is in progress of developing and reaching consensus on a framework and definition for linguistic competence.
- The majority of respondents from Region 1 (55%, n=17), Region 2 (78%, n= 23), Region 3 (71%, n= 21), and Region 5 (62%, n=13) indicated that they are in progress of developing supporting practices to implement culturally and linguistically competent supports and services.
- A majority of respondents in Region 5 (54%, n=13) and moderate percentages of respondents from Region 3 (47%, n=32) and Region 4 (48%, n=23) said their organization could benefit from technical assistance and consultation in advancing cultural and linguistic competence to a great extent.
- The majority of respondents from Region 1 (52%, n=21), Region 2 (64%, n=25), and Region 3 (57%, n=30) indicated that they have an in-progress definition and framework for advancing equity. In Region 4, there was a higher percentage of respondents who did not have a developed nor in progress definition and framework for advancing equity (42%, n=24) than those who had in progress ones (38%, n=24).

When asked to elaborate on how their definition and framework for advancing equity guides their work, respondents indicated the following:

- To inform staff training initiatives,
- Incorporating into mission statements, policies and practices, and
- To enhance workplace culture.

The results from the Multi-Regional forums also highlighted differences between organizations in response to the various questions.

- Specifically, of the 13 respondents who answered this question, 46% reported that their organization is in progress and 36% reported that their organization has fully developed and reached consensus on a framework and definition of cultural competence.
- In contrast, respondents (33%, n=12) indicated that their organization is not in progress or has not developed and reached consensus on a framework and definition of linguistic competence.
- 86% of respondents (n=14) indicated that their organization has a current action plan to incorporate culturally competent practices across all programmatic operations, while 62% of respondents (n=13) indicated that their organization has a current action plan to incorporate linguistically competent practices across all programmatic operations.
- Majority of respondents indicated they are in progress for developing supporting policies (57%, n=14), structures (77%, n=13), and practices (64%, n=11) to implement culturally and linguistically competent supports and services.
- 45% of respondents (n=11) said they have an in-progress definition and framework for equity and 27% of respondents (n=11) have fully developed definitions and frameworks.

When asked to elaborate on how their definition and framework for advancing equity guides their work, respondents indicated the following:

- goal setting,
- informing policy and training,
- communication,
- data collection, and
- decision-making.

Results from the make-up session, convened on August 13, 2024, showed the organizations' varied responses.

- 48% of respondents (n=125) indicated "yes, in progress," followed by 23% of respondents (n=125) who said "yes, fully developed" for the status of their organizations' framework and definition for cultural competence.
- For linguistic competence, 34% of respondents (n=132) indicated "yes, in progress" and 30% indicated "not sure" (n=132) on whether they developed and reached consensus on a framework and definition.
- A moderate percentage of respondents (42%, n=138) said that they have a current action plan to incorporate culturally competent practices across all programmatic operations.
- 36% of respondents (n=129) indicated that they were not sure if they have a current action plan to incorporate linguistically competent practices across all programmatic operations.
- Moderate percentages of respondents indicated that they are in progress for developing policies (44%, n=137), structures (47%, n=138), and practices (45%, n=132) to implement culturally and linguistically competent services.
- Respondents indicated that their organization could benefit "quite a bit" from technical assistance and consultation to integrate cultural and

linguistic competence in its policy (36%, n=130), administration (36%, n=130), practices (36%, n=130), services and supports (37%, n=128), meaningful inclusion of persons with lived experience of IDD and their families (37%, n=126), and community engagement (36%, n=124).

- 37% of respondents (n=110) indicated "yes, in progress" when asked whether their organization has a definition and framework for equity while 26% of respondents (n=110) indicated "no, neither developed nor in progress."

Respondents indicated that their organization could benefit "quite a bit" from technical assistance and consultation to integrate cultural and linguistic competence as follows:

- 1) mission (29%, n=131), 2) policy (36%, n=130), 3) administration (36%, n=130), 4) practices (36%, n=130), 5) services and supports (37%, n=128), 6) the meaningful inclusion of persons with lived experience of IDD and their families (37%, n=126), and 7) community engagement (36%, n=124).
- 37% of respondents (n=110) indicated that their organization has an in-progress definition and framework for equity while 26% of respondents (n=110) indicated that they have neither developed nor have an in-progress definition and framework for equity.

When asked to elaborate on how their definition and framework for advancing equity guides their work, respondents indicated the following:

- cultivating staff knowledge through training and education,
- developing and abiding by employee policies, and
- evaluating and assessing policies related to equity.

Analysis and Key Findings from ThoughtExchange Question

Participants were asked an open-ended question using ThoughtExchange, a software platform technology, regarding the primary barriers that their organization faces in advancing cultural and linguistic competence. Results from the ThoughtExchange question include a qualitative analysis of the themes that emerged from the respondents' answers.

ThoughtExchange responses from respondents from Regions 1-5, convened on May 2 to May 10, 2024, indicated that the primary barriers to advancing cultural and linguistic ccompetence to advancing cultural and linguistic included:

- funding and resource constraints,
- need for staff and training,
- lack of clear organizational structures and practices,
- complexities with aligning organizational efforts and policies for systemic change,
- resistance, and
- geographical barriers.

ThoughtExchange responses from the Multi-Regional forum, convened on May 10, 2024, indicated that the primary barriers faced by organizations in advancing cultural and linguistic competence included:

- financial and resource constraints, including shortage of staffing and leadership support,
- time and effort in implementation,
- navigating understanding of and commitment to cultural and linguistic competence, and
- lack of adequate interpretation services.

ThoughtExchange responses from the make-up forum, convened on August 13, 2024, highlighted that the primary barriers to advancing cultural and linguistic included:

- funding and resource constraints,
- need for training and education,
- need to prioritize and understand the importance of cultural and linguistic competence,
- policy and structural barriers,
- staffing constraints,
- barriers related to language,
- need for community engagement, and
- resistance/leadership buy-in.

Summary of Participants' Evaluation of the Provider Forums

The NCCC Research and Evaluation team conducted an evaluation after each virtual forum. A summary of these survey findings revealed that the majority of respondents indicated that the Regional Provider Forum objectives were met. Most of the respondents reported that they were satisfied with the forums. Insights from open-ended responses highlighted respondents' satisfaction with the forum, and an increase in their knowledge about definitions and frameworks for cultural competence and linguistic competence. Respondents recommended that the forum content could be simplified, that real-world examples be provided through case studies, more time to respond to questions, and guidance on how to apply the information learned to a large organization. This may indicate that the respondents did not understand the purpose of the forum which was designed to elicit data from providers about system capacity for cultural competence, linguistic competence, and equity and to develop a comprehensive report of findings along with recommendations to OPWDD. It appears that some providers viewed the forum as a webinar or training event rather than a data gathering activity.

Observations and Recommendations

Observation 1.

The forums described in detail widely accepted definitions and frameworks for cultural competence, linguistic competence, diversity, equity and inclusion as a basis for providers to consider when responding to survey questions designed to assess what these concepts and terms mean within their respective organizations.

The great majority of responses from provider organizations that participated in the forum expressed a clear commitment to and understanding of the critical need for cultural competence, linguistic competence, diversity, equity, and inclusion within New York State's system of supports and services for persons with IDD and their families. Analysis of survey data indicates that there are widely varying conceptualizations of cultural competence, linguistic competence, and equity across

regions. Guidance from OPWDD is required that defines exactly what constitutes cultural competence, linguistic competence, and equity and how such policies and practices are demonstrated and measured. In absence of this guidance, each individual provider organization will approach cultural competence, linguistic competence, and equity in its own way which may impede a coordinated and comprehensive approach to systems change.

Survey data indicated that while some provider organizations described themselves as "culturally competent" and "linguistically competent," many others stated that they can benefit from technical assistance and resources to strengthen their capacity to serve people with IDD and their families in a manner that is responsive to their cultures, languages, and the communities in which they live.

Recommendation 1.

OPWDD developed a vision statement for cultural competence, linguistic competence, diversity, equity, and inclusion within the IDD system in New York State. OPWDD also developed definitions and frameworks for cultural competence, linguistic competence, and equity for its internal functions as a state entity and which extends to the IDD system as a whole. It is recommended that OPWDD engage the network of providers in a multistep process to: 1) present its vision statement and definitions and elicit feedback from the perspectives of voluntary providers; 2) make any modifications to the vision statement and definitions based on provider insights and experiences; 3) determine the fiscal and staffing implications of cultural competence to providers in general and for linguistic competence in particular; and 4) develop a multi-year action plan that is responsive to the interests and needs of provider organizations across all regions.

It is recommended that OPWDD engage persons with IDD and their families across diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural and other identity groups to review the vision statement and definitions and elicit feedback based on their lived experience.

Observation 2.

Providers identified numerous barriers to implementing cultural competence, linguistic competence, and equity within their respective organizations. These barriers are delineated in detail in the narrative and tables of this report. Cultural competence is a developmental process that occurs over time. Systems and organizations are at stages along a continuum ranging from cultural incapacity to cultural proficiency. Based on survey data, provider organizations in New York State have knowledge and expertise in supporting people with IDD and their families across diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and other identity groups. Providers that indicated they have not yet started this work could benefit from the knowledge and expertise of other providers.

Recommendation 2.

OPWDD, in partnership with self-advocacy organizations and the provider network in New York State, should create a structure, with dedicated resources, to launch and maintain an "organizational learning and exchange community" dedicated to: 1) sharing best and emerging evidence-based practices for cultural and linguistic competence and equity; 2) offering mentoring and coaching to the leadership, boards, and other staff to increase capacity for cultural and linguistic competence and

equity; 3) including persons with IDD and family member as "subject matter experts" on their lived experience to guide the work of the organizational learning and exchange community.

Observation 3.

Training was frequently described by provider organizations as one of the primary approaches to advance cultural and linguistic competence and equity. Other approaches are necessary to facilitate and maintain organizational change.

Recommendation 3.

OPWDD and other provider organizations should consider:

- Applying organizational and individual change theories to guide the work of advancing cultural and linguistic competence and equity. For example, Managing Complex Change, as originally developed by The Leadership Spectrum® Enterprise Management Limited 1994, is an excellent framework to guide organizational change efforts. This framework identifies five elements of change and the outcomes if any element is missing. This is particularly relevant given the survey data responses that highlight skills, resources, and action plans as missing elements.
- Conducting policy audits and reviews to determine the extent to which organizational values and policies align with efforts to advance cultural and linguistic competence and equity.

Observation 4.

Provider organizations participating in the forums described problems advancing cultural and linguistic competence, and equity based on the demographic makeup and geographic location within New York State. These barriers include historical inequities, marginalization and minoritization, disparities in resource allocation, and socio-cultural contexts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, frequently refer to as DEI. There is growing opposition to "all things DEI" in many areas of the U.S. and New York State is no exception.

Recommendation 4.

Given recent changes in attitudes and policies in some states and nationally, provider organizations will need to develop compelling rationales why cultural and linguistic competence are essential to the provision of supports and services to all persons with IDD and families that reside in New York State. This may involve but is not limited to: 1) providing data on disparities affecting persons with IDD and their families across all racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and other identity group; 2) describing all persons with IDD as an underserved population and highlighting the disproportionate impact on specific groups; and 3) deciding if and when to use the term "DEI" when describing efforts to ensure equal access to supports and services as specified in federal and state statute.