



Diversity

The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council's Position:

Missouri public and private agencies and organizations should value and reflect the rich and diverse demographics of the state and implement policies and practices that are inclusive of disability, race, ethnicity, culture, age, religion, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. Missouri should develop and implement laws, policies, and practices that ensure equal rights to all including full and equal access to goods and services.

The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council's Reasons:

Diversity is important because it helps us learn from one another, empowering us to build upon our strengths to address common challenges and create a more equitable, effective, and inclusive society¹ Research shows that diversity is associated with improved human development and well-being² and that people from different cultures possess skills and perspectives that can maximize the abilities of others including theoretical and practical knowledge and access to professional and social networks.³ In addition, organizations that value and practice diversity are more productive,⁴ innovative,⁵ and better at problem-solving.⁶ For example, companies that hire people with disabilities have increased profitability, competitive advantage, and enhanced corporate image.⁷

However, public and private organizations too-often fail to reflect the characteristics and values of the communities they serve or society-at-large.⁸ For example, despite recent encouragement and improvements in diversity, only 17% of board seats in Russell 3000 companies are held by underrepresented groups and only 27% are held by women.⁹ In addition, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities report experiencing barriers to inclusion in Boards of Directors and other leadership positions and, when included, report being ignored or treated as a token.¹⁰ Similarly, although government appointments have grown more diverse in recent years, they do not approach the diversity found in the general population.¹¹ In the words of former SEC Commissioner Luis A. Aguilar, "It is past time to see the diversity of our nation reflected in corporate boardrooms, in the financial industry, and in the government."¹²

The Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council's Recommendations:

- As a state and society, we must value diversity of culture, experience, language, and ideas and acknowledge that diverse public and private businesses and organizations are more productive and effective.
- Missouri should ensure that a diverse array of culturally, linguistically, and cognitively competent services and supports are available to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout the state.
- Missouri should develop and implement laws and policies that ensure equal rights, treatment, and opportunities to all regardless of disability, race, ethnicity, culture, age, religion, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.
- Missouri state government should take the lead and demonstrate the value of diversity by ensuring that appointments to state and local government positions, boards and advisory panels reflect the diverse demographics and values of the communities they serve and of society-at-large.
- Missouri should conduct outreach to people of diverse cultures, experiences, languages, and ideas in a culturally and linguistically competent manner with the aim of increasing their use of available supports and services and their participation in public boards, agencies, and advisory panels.
- Missouri should require that businesses and organizations contracting or doing business with the state value, encourage, and empower diversity and have policies and practices inclusive of disability, race, ethnicity, culture, age, religion, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status
- Missouri should require that businesses and organizations contracting or doing business with the state have products and services that are accessible to people of culturally, linguistically, and cognitively diverse backgrounds.
- Grants funded by Missouri public agencies should have cultural, linguistic, and cognitive diversity and competency goals and include measurable outcomes reflecting outreach to people of diverse cultures and experiences.

References

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