

Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc.



CULTURAL EQUITY POLICY

FOUNDATION STATEMENT

Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc. (MHA) seeks to provide individuals and families with high quality, community based and recovery oriented services that respect cultural differences and foster hope, strength and self-determination. Special consideration is given to individuals and families with high needs and low resources. MHA operates on the fundamental principle that it is the right of every culture to express itself, develop, and thrive in an environment free from oppression.

RESPECT STATEMENT

MHA is committed to creating and sustaining an environment in which staff, interns, volunteers, program participants and others are treated with respect and dignity. MHA representatives shall not participate in, nor tolerate situations in which persons are maligned or mistreated, for reasons including but not limited to race, color, religion, sex, marital status, familial status, military or veteran status, age, disability, national origin, citizenship, gender identity, sexual orientation, genetic information, status as a victim of domestic violence, or any other status protected by federal, state, or local law. All MHA representatives will actively promote an environment consistent with these principles and guidelines.

VISION FOR CULTURALLY EQUITABLE SERVICES

MHA defines “Culture” as the distinctive spiritual, intellectual, emotional and material traditions and features of a people, and “Equitable” as meaning fair and just. As a matter of principle, then, all cultures have the inherent right to develop, expecting fair and just treatment in relationship to all other cultures. However, communities of color (Native American, African, Asian, Polynesian, Latin American, etc.) and marginalized groups (LGBTQ community, individuals with disabilities, individuals who are homeless, Muslim, Jewish and other non-Christian communities, etc.) have not received a fair share of resources. As a result, it is MHA’s goal to understand circumstances affecting fair access to resources, healthcare, education, livelihood, full participation in the governmental process and inclusive community life.

MHA believe that cultural equity is fundamental to providing quality services that promote individual and family strengths, dignity, and self-reliance. Cultural equity broadens and enriches the delivery of services by providing a more holistic, relevant view of the world and the helping process. Cultural equity does not stand apart from but is intrinsic to good service practices.

Cultural equity demands an ongoing commitment to openness and learning, taking time and taking risks, sitting with uncertainty and discomfort, and not having quick solutions or easy answers. It involves building trust, mentoring, developing and nurturing a frame of reference that considers alliances across cultures as enriching rather than threatening.

To that end, MHA will be guided by five values:

- **Inclusiveness:** MHA will actively seek out and benefit from staff and volunteers who bring a broad array of multicultural perspectives. These perspectives will be evidenced in how MHA makes policy, personnel, and administrative and service delivery decisions, and creates an open and welcoming environment.
- **Cultural Allies:** It is not enough to only increase the diversity of MHA's staff and volunteers, its work environment must promote reciprocal sharing and learning across cultural groups. Building allies across cultural groups is MHA's vehicle for promoting partnerships, equality and community.
- **Self-Awareness:** All persons have cultural attributes that connect them to and separate them from others. By exploring, validating and acknowledging these attributes in one's own culture, as well as in others' cultures, it is possible to create greater opportunity to build relationships and alliances across cultural groups.
- **Diversity:** We will continue to make our workplaces trusting places to have complex, and sometimes difficult, conversations about diversity and inclusion: We will create and maintain environments, platforms, and forums where staff feel comfortable reaching out to their colleagues and providers to gain greater awareness of each other's experiences and perspectives. By encouraging an ongoing dialogue and continually evaluating our commitment to the values of openness, we are building trust, encouraging compassion and open-mindedness, and reinforcing our commitment to a culture of inclusivity. We will implement and expand unconscious bias education: Understanding and appreciating the diverse cultural complexities that influence identity, assumptions, behaviors, expectations, and beliefs can greatly benefit all aspects of human interaction.
- **Involvement:** MHA organizational and informal relationships with multiple cultural groups in the community, as well as the personal connections of its staff and volunteers, are prerequisites to better understanding and advocating for those facing complex challenges.