



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

Racial & Social Equity in Employment: Challenges and Solutions

Idea #1 – Fundamentally, using good data is necessary to drive for improved and more equitable outcomes for the many underrepresented communities and intersectional identities contained within the broader disability community. Good data must capture not only disability status, but also disaggregated that data by race. Our nation, our government, and our policies will never advance an equity agenda, unless decision makers can clearly see the disproportionate impact of their choices.

The pandemic has made clear that the nation must transform itself to advance racial justice and make equitable opportunities a reality. Achieving that reality must begin by improving employment outcomes for Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) people with disabilities. There are 3.2 million working-age African Americans with disabilities, most of whom face structural barriers to success. Therefore, we would like to reflect on the realities and challenges that continue to shape the lives of Black people with disabilities.

In the economic expansion prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 32 percent of working-age percent of working-age African Americans with disabilities had jobs, compared to 75.5 percent of working-age African Americans without disabilities. Even before the coronavirus disproportionately impacted BIPOC communities, fully 32 percent of African Americans with disabilities lived in poverty, compared to 20.9 percent of African Americans without disabilities.

This data was drawn together from the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, released by the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire. Making such data publicly available is a good first step. However, such data then needs to drive the actions taken by decision makers throughout society.

The Compendium can be found here: <https://disabilitycompendium.org/>

The Compendium Supplement with detailed racial data can be found here: <https://disabilitycompendium.org/compendium/2020-annual-disability-statistics-supplement>

Another example of good data to drive future decision making, is the [National Core Indicators Data Brief](#) released in February 2021 by the Human Services Research Institute (HRSI) and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS). This report contains a variety of statistics on racial and ethnic disparities in quality of life and health domains for people with ID/DD.

The brief describes itself as “a beginning step in what is intended to be a comprehensive examination of disparities experienced by Black participants in the public IDD system. Using data from the National Core Indicators In-Person Survey, the brief highlights statistically significant differences among a range of outcomes experienced by Black participants compared to white participants.”

For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who are part of marginalized racial and ethnic groups, issues of racial equity and disparities overlap and intersect with the stigma associated with ableism. Researchers have called this the “double burden” of racial and ethnic disparities among people living with disabilities

The full brief can be found here: https://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/upload/core-indicators/NCI_DB_RacialEquity_final.pdf

Moving the nation to become more equitable for underrepresented communities and dismantling systems that create marginalization requires a transformation in culture, practice and the economy. It requires the courage and commitment of every American and the adoption of policies to end disparities.

Idea #2 – Beyond well documented gap in employment opportunities, educational outcomes and family wealth, BIPOC communities across the United States face serious barriers in access technology and with it, future access to the economy. A September 2020 report from Deutsche Bank found a “digital racial gap” and warned that “76% of Blacks and 62% of Hispanics could get shut out or be under-prepared for 86% of jobs in the US by 2045.”

The full report is available here: https://www.dbresearch.com/PROD/RPS_EN-PROD/PROD000000000511664/America%27s_Racial_Gap_%26_Big_Tech%27s_Closing_Window.pdf?undefined&reload=efv~JF1N~lvocSfXBPdyexKvp2jbo1MIMvu7xTBup9BbkkkqSgQHLxfiOmixq6HIJ4TCauNYP7tATU1ZcBBjQw==

Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic created incredible challenges for all students and their families, but this is especially true for students with disabilities, BIPOC students with disabilities, and the wider BIPOC community. A late 2020 study by UCLA found that “racial inequality is significant, with African Americans and Hispanics being 1.3 to 1.4 times as likely to experience limited accessibility as non-Hispanic Whites.” Full report here: https://knowledge.luskin.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Digital-Divide-Phase2_brief_release_v01.pdf

As such, working to close the technology gap, improve internet access, and providing low/no cost hardware needs to be a high priority.

Idea #3 – The COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant economic crisis has deeply harmed and uniquely impacted minority communities across the country. As captured in [an NPR report](#) on the disproportionate impact of COVID-19, “like African-Americans, Latinos are over-represented in essential jobs that increase their exposure to the virus.”

The disability community is, by nature, intersectional. Immigration advocacy organization IMM Print estimates that there are up to “1.5 million undocumented individuals...with a disability.”

Further, Census Bureau data shows that there are more than 44 million immigrants living in the United States and out of that number, up to 6 million are probably living with a disability.

The public charge rule under the previous Administration created significant fear within immigrant communities and deterred many immigrants from seeking to become Americans. This has had second order effects in our nation's school system. In total, [our nation's public schools](#) serve 6.3 million students with disabilities. That number specifically includes 1,716,195 Latinx students with disabilities. The changing demographics of America are reflected in these students. 11.4 percent of students with disabilities nationwide, or almost 720,000 students, also identified as [English-language learners](#). Their accommodation needs are compounded by the fact that many come from households that do not speak English at home, adding an extra challenge for parental interaction. It also can be harder to diagnose disabilities in children when they are English language learners.

As such, unique attention is needed to support English language learners, students with disabilities, and the broader community of immigrants with disabilities.

3. Examples of Racial and Social Equity in Employment

Idea #1 – Addressing equity issues and racial justice in the context of workforce development, is beyond the scope of many programs, projects, and organizations. However, there are some great resources to help your group get started talking about equity issues in your work. Back in 2019, the National Skills Coalition released [The Roadmap for Racial Equity: An imperative for workforce advocates](#). This roadmap is a thorough report looking at “the racial and ethnic disparities in educational attainment and access; systemic barriers to equitable workforce training and quality employment; and why advancing equity is an economic and moral imperative.” It is great report and well worth your time.

Likewise, the researchers and advocates at the Center for American Progress have put together a policy document called [A Design for Workforce Equity Workforce Redesign for Quality Training and Employment](#). This report looks at the direct benefits to job quality and competitiveness from embracing an equity agenda in workforce development.

Lastly, for non-profit leaders, the National Council of Non-Profits has put together some detailed ideas on diversity, inclusion, and equity from advocacy agendas to board recruitment. You can find an inventory of their equity resources here: <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter-nonprofits>

Idea #2 – Returning once again to the [National Core Indicators Data Brief](#), NASDDS' report offers a critical framework for beginning to operationalize racial and social equity in the context of workforce services.

The brief points to a “possible framework to analyze the components of public systems that may result in disparities proposed by the World Health Organization to assess gender equality in health care. The components of the WHO framework include four criteria for assessing disparities: Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, and Quality. The Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) has used these categories—in addition to

Utilization—as components of a framework to examine potential causes for racial and ethnic disparities. Tawara Goode, in a video introducing the NCCC Disparities Framework, notes that once a disparity is identified, one can use the criteria to examine the potential reasons for that disparity. Goode describes the five criteria as variations on the following:

- Availability – the array, type and intensity of services and supports being offered, and whether it fits the needs of different races/ethnicities.
- Accessibility – the geographic distribution, hours of service, accommodations, and universal design of services and supports and whether these factors are systematically disenfranchising certain populations.
- Acceptability – the degree to which services reflect a respect for the values, histories, expectations, language, and experiences of a group. The capacity to plan and deliver culturally and linguistically competent services may affect whether services are acceptable to different races/ethnicities.
- Quality – the overall quality of services and supports. Does quality differ depending on to whom a service is being provided? This may alienate racial and ethnic groups.
- Utilization – rates of utilization of services and supports may differ by race/ethnicity. Research would be needed to identify the reasons behind this difference.

The NCCC framework also includes an examination of the nature of policies and level of resources that may contribute to any disparities in any one or more of the criteria. Finally, this framework, when applied to a service system, can be used to assess disparities in the many services and supports that human services participants rely on (e.g., housing, transportation, education, mental health, etc.).

The framework provides public managers and researchers with an analytic approach to seeking answers when their data show differential outcomes. Applying the framework should lead to a more systematic approach and, as Professor Goode suggests, the process should include the people who receive supports and services from this system or with lived experience. This in-depth exploration, however, will not be possible unless state datasets include robust information on race, ethnicity, and languages spoken in information systems across multiple agencies.”

As such, this Brief and this framework is worth consideration as an example of beginning to implement a social and racial equity agenda into disability employment work.

Sincerely,
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The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society. The Employment and Training Task Force monitors federal legislation and regulations relevant to the employment of people with disabilities, particularly issues related to the programs and projects funded under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.