

**JEDI Cultural Competence Plan**  
**Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**  
**Career Opportunity Development, Inc.**  
**FY 2023 (July 2022 – June 2023)**

CODI's leadership values justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion and strives to incorporate these values throughout our culture. We envision that instilling these values throughout our culture will enhance opportunities for all to succeed. We work to create and sustain a positive, inclusive working environment characterized by respect and support among all shareholders. CODI embraces the dynamics of a diverse workforce and recognizes that diverse perspectives, life experiences, and input enhance decision-making, problem-solving, creativity, innovation, and adaptability.

Disparities exist in all aspects of life, but nowhere are they more clearly experienced than in health care and social services. Understanding and valuing diverse cultures, customs, traditions, history, varying styles of communication, and institutions is integral to providing culturally competent care. Therefore, we must engage organizational shareholders in working toward and contributing to an inclusive and fair workplace.

CODI recognizes that culture is the "way of life" within a group of people and can affect fundamental behaviors, including how we think, what we believe, how we express ourselves, the language we speak, who we trust, and how we cope in our daily lives. Culture and cultural norms shape experiences, perceptions, decisions, and how individuals relate to one another. These beliefs and experiences influence the way consumers respond to services and interventions and also impact how services are delivered. We must always be mindful that cultural competence is based on respect.

### **Defining Cultural Competence**

Cultural competence is understanding and communicating effectively with individuals from diverse cultures. The best way to exercise cultural competence is to pay attention, ask questions, and be prepared to accept and respect differences. Cultural competence must be learned and requires a level of interest and compassion for the wide range of human differences.

## Concepts of Cultural Competence

Competence consists of four capabilities: drive, knowledge, strategy, and action.

- Drive - relates to one's level of interest. It is the motivation to adapt to intercultural situations.
- Knowledge - relates to one's understanding of how cultures are similar and different.
- Strategy - relates to one's awareness and ability to plan in light of cultural insight.
- Action - relates to one's adaptability when relating to and working in an intercultural environment.

### Steps to Cultivating Cultural Competence:

We can learn to be culturally competent by enhancing our knowledge and awareness of other cultures, increasing cross-cultural communication skills, and understanding and managing personal biases. In addition, staff must strive to:

Value diversity – Do not merely tolerate individuals with differing backgrounds and viewpoints but carefully consider the value of differences and varying strengths.

Be conscious of dynamics when individuals from varying cultures interact - Diversity can cause conflict and force individuals out of their comfort zones, but it need not cause division.

Institutionalize cultural knowledge - The importance of knowledge, sensitivity, and inclusiveness must be understood and acknowledged by those at the organization's top. Also, culturally competent policies and practices should be evident throughout the organization.

Adapt service delivery that reflects an understanding of cultural diversity - Deliver services reflecting diverse input and cultural values of those served. The definition and scope of diversity continue to broaden. Diversity includes race, color, creed, religion, sex (including pregnancy), family structure, gender non-conformance, actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity and expression, age, ancestry, national origin, nationality, ethnicity, language,

socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic partner or civil union status, military status, political belief, atypical hereditary cellular blood trait, genetic information, mental or physical disability (including perceived disability, alcoholism or substance use disorder, obesity, HIV or AIDS who may or may not be in treatment or recovery from substance use disorder with legitimately prescribed medication[s]) or other status protected by applicable federal, state or local law, or the ability to pay the residential service fee. In light of the ever-expanding definition of diversity, cultural competence also continues to evolve. Being culturally competent enables staff to become more attuned with and sensitive to individual, family, and group-specific needs, values, beliefs, implicit biases, communication styles, and attitudes. Cultural competence is essential to providing culturally competent care, interventions, services, and support.

### **Enhancing Cultural Competence and Cross-Cultural Awareness**

Enhancing cultural competence and cross-cultural awareness is an ongoing process. Cultural competence is critical in understanding circumstances and social issues from a consumer perspective. This mindset is also essential as staff must be aware of personal attitudes and biases surrounding their cultural identity and how consumers view them. It is important to remember that assessing all aspects of an individual's belief system, values, and how they view themselves within their culture is an integral component of service provision.

Possessing an understanding of varying cultural values, beliefs, and norms enables us to help others learn about different views and perspectives. This insight allows staff to match clients' needs appropriately for person-centered planning, resources, and services.

Developing insights requires developing cross-cultural communication skills. For cross-cultural communications to be effective, staff must listen closely, pay attention, and not interrupt. Also, paying attention to non-verbal communication, such as body language and gestures, is essential. We must also strive to suspend judgment, keep an open mind, respectfully ask questions for clarification, and be patient.

### **Self-Awareness and Management of Personal Biases**

Self-awareness is an essential skill to possess. Self-awareness involves mindfully recognizing one's cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions. Self-awareness is critical when interacting with others. We need to be aware of our

sense of self and how personal thoughts and feelings may affect our beliefs, service delivery, and interactions.

We must be aware of our value systems and identify biases that may impact others. Examining and identifying personal views and biases allows for developing inclusive views while being flexible and accepting. Most people unconsciously expect others to behave in ways they are familiar with. When a person's behaviors deviate from what we expect, we might make judgments that are inaccurate or that do not serve us well in working with others. Like cultural awareness, it is necessary to be self-aware and manage our personal biases so that we can fully understand how different beliefs, values, or religions affect one's perspectives on family dynamics, individual beliefs, and personal views.

Ethics and values are the core of our work. We must be aware of and understand the mechanisms of how personal values and beliefs affect everyone, but especially those of varying cultures and backgrounds. We must also accept and respect others' ethics and values and not attempt to impose our beliefs.

We must also exercise empathy by actively listening and attempting to understand others' stories and perspectives from their point of view. When we do this, we gain a better understanding of oppression, discrimination, and inequality and exercise justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. This understanding is essential to meaningful service delivery. A culturally competent and sensitive workforce promotes a broad approach to care, practice, interventions, and services. Cultural competence draws upon the ability to reformulate one's concept of self and others. Cultural competence is more than simply learning about cultures and their norms; it emphasizes transforming views and adapting behaviors in the circumstances involving intersecting cultures.

Gaining and maintaining cross-cultural sensitivity and cultural competence remains challenging as the term culture and how it relates to individuals continues to evolve. We must possess the skills to understand a broad spectrum of cultures and appreciate the influential beliefs associated with a specific culture. An informed staff member will better understand how culture and diversity impact how we present services and treatment and what interventions could produce better outcomes.

CODI's JEDI Cultural Competence Plan is designed to ensure services and strategies are implemented within the cultural context of staff and populations

served. The plan's goal is to ensure CODI uses a strategic approach to enhance justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout all interactions.

Services delivered to consumers focus on Person-Centered Planning (PCP). PCP has routinely been a part of CODI's organizational culture and is included in CODI's Universal Policies, which are reviewed by staff annually. In addition, new hires are required to review this policy within 30 days of hire. Staff must understand that cultural influences are critical components of wellness and recovery, including how consumers communicate and manifest symptoms, coping styles, willingness to seek treatment, and family and community support. Service delivery requires cultural competence where staff recognizes, respects, and addresses unique needs, worth, thoughts, communications, customs, actions, and beliefs while also reflecting consumer's racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups or sexual orientation.

### **Defining Culture**

Culture is a set of unified values, ideas, beliefs, and standards of behavior shared by a group of people. It is how a person accepts direction, interprets, and understands experiences throughout their life. Culture is passed from generation to generation and includes religious practices, food, art, education, race, ethnicity, language, health practices, and much more.

Employment data from February 2022 shows CODI employs a workforce of 67% females and 33% males. 40% of staff are African American, 53% Caucasian, 4% Latino, and 3% Asian.

When considering the generational make-up of our workforce, according to the Pew Research Center guidelines, 27% are Baby Boomers, 37% are Generation X, 30% are Millennials, and 6% are Generation Z.

### **Outcomes of Culturally Competent Service Provision**

- Demonstrate a greater understanding of the central role of culture in social services
- Recognize common barriers to cultural understanding
- Identify characteristics of cultural competence
- Assess and respond to differences in values, beliefs, and behaviors among diverse populations

- Demonstrate commitment to culturally and linguistically appropriate services
- Work more effectively with diverse staff, consumers, families, and community partners
- Serve as leaders, mentors, and role models for community partners and other social service providers

### **Leadership’s Commitment to Cultural Competence**

There is a vast difference between an organization that merely talks about cultural competence and an organization that lives it. CODI strives to create culturally competent service delivery and promote justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. CODI’s Leadership Team is responsible for recommending, monitoring, and coordinating agency structures and services relating to cultural competence. Leadership is committed to advancing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion at all organizational levels. Results are evidenced through staff training, reviewing results of Performance Outcomes and Cultural Competence Surveys, and recommending and initiating actions, policies, or procedures to enhance cultural competence and maximize inclusivity.

### **Accomplishments FY 2022 (July 2021 – June 2022)**

1. We are proud to announce that CODI raised the hourly rate for direct care professionals to \$16.00 per hour ahead of New Jersey’s January 1, 2024, requirement to raise the minimum wage to \$15 to provide fair, livable wages.
2. Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, this year’s staff in-service was held virtually in August 2021. Instead of the planned topic of varying generational communication styles, generational characteristics, motivators, and multi-generational team-building exercises, the staff viewed and discussed videos on varying cultural perspectives, subconscious biases, and the roots of said biases.

3. We included Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiative information on the website to update staff, consumers, and the public on DEI initiatives.

**Goals FY 2023  
(July 2022– June 2023)**

1. Raise direct care staff salaries to \$18 per hour ahead of New Jersey’s January 1, 2024, requirement to raise the minimum wage to \$15 to provide fair, livable wages.
2. Based on staff recommendations from last year’s In-Service, develop a mechanism to educate staff and consumers on varying cultures and provide opportunities to enhance organizational cultural knowledge.
3. Reinstigate CODI Pride and highlight staff, accomplishments, and cultural initiatives.
4. Develop JEDI webpage

**Summary**

CODI strives to create a corporate culture where all CODI shareholders feel valued, can grow, reach their full potential, and succeed. CODI remains committed to promoting an inclusive culture where shareholders possess the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with individuals from cultures or belief systems different than their own. We encourage a culture where varying views and ideas are valued and used to develop innovative and creative programs and services.