

Policy Considerations: Diversity and Responsiveness

The intent of this policy consideration is to evoke discussion within your jurisdiction regarding best practices and key elements to include in policies and procedures. Jurisdictions should consider these policies in the context of their unique juvenile justice system structure; state and local mandates; risk tolerance level; and other individual needs.

Throughout the policy considerations the acronym “PP” is used. This stands for “policy and/or procedure.”

General

- The PP has a clear statement that describes the importance and intent of the policy and/or procedure and/or how it relates/ties to the agency’s mission.
- The PP includes clear definitions of key concepts in the policy and/or procedure (i.e. can be understood, differences between related words/concepts are clear, etc.) – cultural diversity, cultural responsiveness, etc.
- The PP defines diversity broadly to include in addition to race and ethnicity, other factors that make individuals unique - i.e. family status, gender identity and expression, language, communication, educational background, etc.
- The PP mentions how staff will be trained on relevant topic areas – mandatory new employee and ongoing training.
- The PP clearly describes an effective quality assurance process such as include quarterly case file reviews, annual onsite audits, regular performance evaluations from supervisors, staff skills assessments and training, etc.
- The PP includes a description of how the agency will use data to ensure it is meeting targets in the policy and/or procedure area (i.e. indicators of success, how often these data will be reviewed, how the data will be used and by whom, etc.).
- The PP contains a policy statement clearly affirming youth, staff and visitors are not subjected to discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, etc.
- The PP clearly states equal employment opportunities exist for hiring and promotion of all positions.
- The PP will be available to staff for review.
- The PP reviewed for revision/modifications at least annually.

Division Level Governance

- The PP establishes an agency division responsible for the development, support, and monitoring of culturally competent and responsive practices.
- The PP requires the agency division develop a three-year cultural diversity/responsiveness strategic plan.
- The PP requires the agency’s cultural diversity/responsiveness strategic plan to be reviewed a minimum of annually by the executive team and updated to reflect feedback.
- The PP requires an annual report to be submitted to executive team for review and discussion no later than January 31st of each year.

- The PP describes the minimum topic areas that must be addressed through the annual report including accomplishments, challenges, data/metrics, and areas of focus for the upcoming year (for example: any data limitations that will be remedied).

Cultural Diversity/Responsiveness Committee

- The PP establishes a committee which is responsible for facilitating cultural awareness, promoting racial equity, celebrating diversity, and making recommendations to executive leaders on culturally competent services and initiatives etc.
- The PP describes the purpose of the committee, members (i.e. all levels of the agency represented, ethnically/racially diverse, etc.), and roles of committee members.
- The PP directs the committee to meet a minimum of monthly and take meeting minutes.
- The PP directs that meeting summaries be furnished upon request by the agency executive team.
- The PP directs all divisions/departments, not only the division/department responsible for monitoring cultural diversity, with ensuring operational procedures, services, and environments are culturally responsive.

Youth Services

- The PP requires screening/assessment processes for youth be linguistically and culturally competent. The PP includes periodical reassessment/validation of screening/assessment tools.
- The PP requires all services to youth, including case management and treatment services, be provided in youth and family's primary language and delivered in a culturally responsive way.
- The PP affords youth the opportunity to participate in religious and spiritual services if desired. Religious and spiritual services offered shall be diverse and serve the range of religious needs of the youth.
- The PP allows youth to express their religious traditions through physical appearance such as facial hairstyles, head coverings, hair styles, etc. The rules regarding hair and skin care are culturally sensitive.
- The PP allows youth to possess and use religious items unless deemed a threat to safety of youth and/or staff.
- The PP requires facilities to provide hygiene products that youth request and are specific to diverse needs (i.e. hair products, combs, etc.).
- The PP requires the facility to acknowledge and accommodate dietary restrictions based on religious beliefs.
- The PP requires all facilities to allow for religious and spiritual ceremonies, activities, or events.
- The PP requires facilities to share religious and spiritual activities and event opportunities with youth verbally in community meeting and through visual aids such as posters and calendars.
- The PP prohibits restricting youth from religious and spiritual activities when on suicide watch, isolation, or restricted program unless youth safety is at risk.

- The PP requires facilities to document decisions to restrict youth participation in religious and spiritual activities and where to document this decision.
- The PP requires the decision to restrict youth's access to religious and spiritual activities be communicated immediately (via phone call or email) to the division/department director to allow her/him to stay informed.
- The PP allows youth to request participation in community religious services and the program will attempt to accommodate this request (if appropriate and feasible).
- The PP states youth and their family shall be informed of the non-discrimination policy during intake process both verbally and in written form (youth/family handbook). The youth shall be informed of reporting methods (grievance system) for discriminatory actions.
- The PP requires facilities to provide reading materials and programming to reflect interests and needs of various racial, ethnic and cultural groups.

Training

- The PP requires formal training for new employees on cultural diversity and sensitivity (i.e. examining one's own biases, understanding cultural perspectives and experiences, promoting equity, etc.). The PP and staff training regarding searches procedures are culturally considerate.
- The PP requires mandatory *ongoing* training for all employees on cultural diversity and sensitivity, a minimum of annually.

Quality Assurance and Data

- The PP requires agency and facilities to collect accurate race and ethnicity data on youth and staff.
- The PP establishes formal metrics to track/highlight racial and ethnic disparities across facilities (i.e. discipline, isolation, length of stay, treatment/level progress, access to programs, intake/releases, etc.)
- The PP directs the executive team and high-level managers to review data on a regular basis (i.e. monthly, quarterly, etc.) and discuss solutions for addressing disparities.
- The PP requires the cultural diversity/responsiveness division to work with agency leaders, facilities, and programs to develop comprehensive action plans to address existing disparities.