



**MHTTC**

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Reference Guide

Supporting Intentional Discussions About Diversity,  
Equity and Inclusion



## Acknowledgments

This DEI Reference Guide was developed in 2023 through shared efforts and multiple collaborative meetings held across the MHTTC Network, and within the MHTTC Building Health Equity and Cultural Responsiveness Workgroup (BHE & CRWG). The BHE & CRWG prioritizes the dissemination of culturally appropriate information and provides technical assistance and training for the mental health field, to ensure equitable access to culturally appropriate and resonant mental health services and the utilization of those services, so that people can achieve wellbeing and improved health outcomes.

We thank the following contributors and MHTTCs for their insight and expertise, and commitment to the development of this guide:

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## About Us

The MHTTC Network is funded by SAMHSA to expand capacity for school mental health infrastructure and service delivery based on supplemental funding received for this focus area. To learn more about the MHTTC Network's training, technical assistance, resources, and activities, please visit <https://mhffcnetwork.org/>.

## Disclaimer

The opinions expressed herein are the views of the MHTTC Network's BHE&CRWG, and do not reflect the official position of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), SAMHSA. No official support or endorsement of the DHHS, SAMHSA for the opinions described in this document is intended or should be inferred. At the time of this publication, Dr. Miriam Delphin-Rittmon served as Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use.

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# Introduction

[The Mental Health Technology Transfer Center \(MHTTC\) Network](#) values collective thought, and encourages actions that positively impact mental health outcomes. Given the increasing mental health challenges across our nation, as a collective we must address the need for services that tackle such concerns. This reference guide focuses on supporting intentional dialogue about diversity, [equity](#), and inclusion. As essential as these terms are for bridging the gaps that impact mental health, they are also often misused and misunderstood.

This guide addresses the role of the MHTTC Network as a vehicle to promote and implement DEI principles in behavioral health practices. It also makes clear the position of MHTTCs nationwide when issues of diversity, equity and inclusion are discussed. With this guide, we aim to identify ways we all can play a role in reducing mental health problems by promoting inclusive, equitable, person-centered services. This guide is just one of many resources aimed at encouraging dialogue and responding to individual and collective questions and concerns that may be raised about the MHTTC Network and its services.

Ultimately, the developers of this guide seek to garner interest and compel action that promote healthy spaces where mental health recovery and restoration can occur; acknowledge historic and present day challenges that impact social justice; encourage emerging and established best practices informed by research and analysis; and consciously invite those living with mental health challenges to raise the bar for future service delivery.

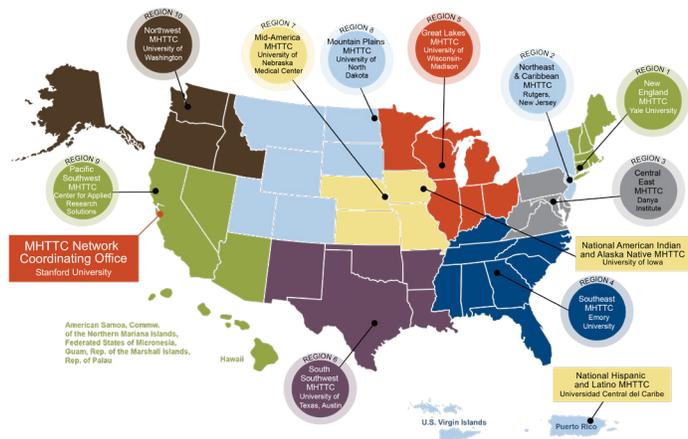
We hope this guide encourages you to access programming that benefits all people and not only a select few, and to actively pursue wellbeing — for yourself and all people.

# Commonly Asked Questions

## *“What is the MHTTC Network? What do the letters in the name stand for?”*

The letters stand for **Mental Health Technology Transfer Center** Network. Technology transfer is a multidimensional process that intentionally promotes the use of innovations, such as evidence-based mental health prevention, treatment, and recovery services ([ATTC Network Technology Transfer Workgroup, 2011](#)).

Our collaborative network provides training and technical assistance, along with the development and dissemination of resources. We partner with systems, organizations, and treatment practitioners involved in the delivery of mental health services to strengthen their capacity for delivering effective evidence-based practices to individuals. The Network represents ten regions throughout the United States, Native American and Tribal Communities, Hispanic and Latino Communities, the U.S. Pacific Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Get started by finding the MHTTC that serves your region [here](#), and feel free to peruse the rest of the [MHTTC website](#) while you're there.



## *“What do dissemination and implementation mean?”*

They are terms used to describe how new practices, like mental health treatments, are spread and adopted into practice.

**Dissemination** is the way we share knowledge about evidence-based practices, that benefit s mental health service organizations and providers. Each day, instruction and resources are developed for education settings, human service organizations, community groups, mental/ behavioral health providers, and government regulated services. They are designed with the intention to edify service providers in areas specific to mental health and related behavioral health challenges. **Implementation** means the process of putting evidence-based practices to use. MHTTC’s help programs implement new practices by providing technical assistance, such as training, coaching, and ongoing learning forums. Requests for ongoing support are evaluated by teams that design learning around presented needs. Dissemination and implementation activities help us support the mental health workforce with learning, materials, and best practices. Learn more about dissemination and implementation science on the MHTTC website [here](#).

*“Diversity, equity, and inclusion discussions always lead to someone being blamed or called out. How do you address equity without all the finger pointing?”*

Discussions about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are important. How they are managed is equally important. All dialogue should invite and include all voices, identities and perspectives. The MHTTC Network believes:

1

- DEI is about working toward a just playing field: DEI is not about favoring one group over another, but rather it is about ensuring that everyone has equal opportunities and is treated with respect, regardless of their background

2

- DEI is not about threatening or discrediting one’s own identity: DEI does not mean giving up one’s own beliefs, values, or culture. It’s about learning to appreciate and respect the differences that make each individual unique.

3

- DEI benefits everyone: DEI can help improve results for entire populations by helping reduce the inequality gaps of for affected people and communities affected by them. A diverse and inclusive society is not just good for marginalized groups,— it benefits everyone by creating a stronger, more understanding, empathic, and dynamic community.

*“I believe DEI programs are overpriced and over funded. What are the benefits of MHTTC services to society?”*

Our services are funded by the Substance Abuse Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA). There is no cost to access the services we provide. SAMHSA provides funds to MHTTCs nationwide to allow the Centers to create no-cost learning programs that accelerate the adoption and implementation of mental health related, evidence-based, culturally-adapted, and emerging best practices across the nation; heighten the awareness, knowledge, and skills of the workforce that addresses the needs of individuals living with mental illness; foster regional and national alliances among culturally diverse practitioners, researchers, policy makers, family members, and consumers of mental health services; and ensure the availability and delivery of publicly available, free of charge, training and technical assistance to the mental health field.



## *“What informs MHTTC programming?”*

MHTTC-developed training, technical assistance activities, resources and products are informed by best and promising practices (BPPs). We chose the model of “best and promising practices” to include evidence-based practices, community-defined evidence, and culturally adapted practices. This definition promotes programs and strategies that have positive outcomes on behavioral health.



Through a Network-wide coordination group, we have developed a BPP Fact Sheet Library that provides information about BPPs to help organizations and providers match a practice to the needs of their clients, staff, and funders. Each fact sheet provides a comprehensive overview of a specific behavioral health practice, including the population for whom the practice is appropriate, the providers and systems that can implement the practice, and the investment of resources needed to deliver the practice effectively. Each fact sheet also includes the evidence available to support the practice, as well as details about fidelity assessment instruments. Access the MHTTC BPP Fact Sheet Library [here](#).

## *“Aren’t DEI and social emotional learning (SEL) programs the same thing? Some parents say they have a negative impact on children.”*

Diversity, equity, and inclusion programs are not social emotional learning programs. There is a relationship between DEI and SEL programs, but they are not the same. SEL focuses on developing awareness of oneself and awareness of other people. Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts use that awareness as a platform for creating healthy environments where all are welcome and treated with respect. Moreover, research tells us SEL programs have positive effects on school climate, student behavior, and student performance.

Depending on the state or territory you live in, there may be restrictions on SEL and DEI programs in K-12 schools and work environments.

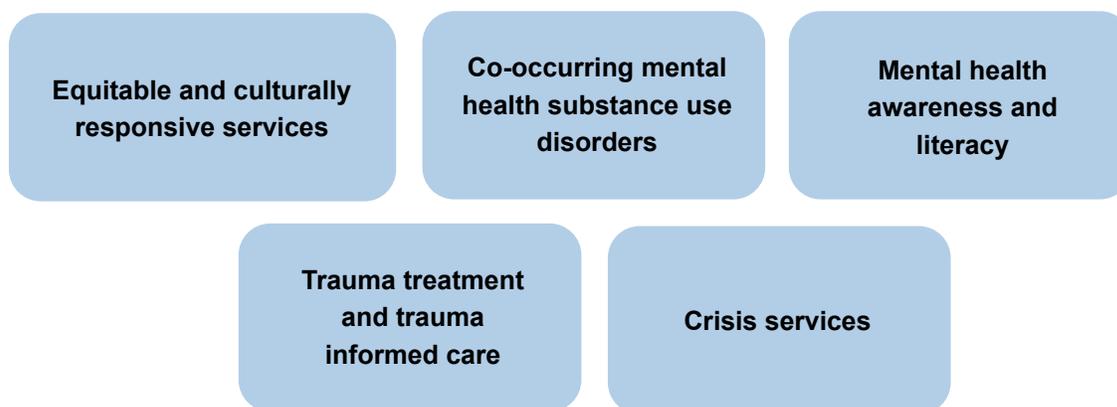
[Frameworks-Equity.pdf \(casel.org\)](#)

[The Intersection of SEL and DEI in Our Schools Northwestern University | School of Education & Social Policy](#)

[The-Intersection-of-Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-and-Social-Emotional-Competencies.pdf \(researchgate.net\)](#)

*“How do you decide what needs and topics to prioritize for your MHTTC programming?”*

We design our activities around the mental health needs in each region or population. Across the nation, there are organizations are introducing effective models of service through the efforts of the MHTTC Network. In collaboration with these organizations, a large variety of products and resources have been created. To ensure we are addressing the most pressing needs in the mental health field, a needs assessment was conducted in 2021 and completed by individuals in communities needing services, those receiving services, and those who support individuals in need. Respondents to the needs assessment indicated that the following were the top five most frequently requested technical assistance and training topics:



A listing of MHTTC programming has been developed to date to address the priority needs listed above for, equitable and culturally response services, and is highlighted in our MHTTC Racial Equity and Cultural Diversity Resource Collection [here](#).

The complete MHTTC needs assessment summary report can be accessed on the MHTTC website [here](#).

In addition to the MHTTC Needs Assessment conducted to identify needs/priorities of the mental health workforce, each Center has an Area of Focus for which they serve as experts, develop national products, and host a webpage. We encourage you to learn more by accessing unique summary documents developed by each MHTTC, containing a collection of resources for each Area of Focus topic from Years 1-4 of our Network. We encourage you to review our Area of Focus Summaries [here](#).

*“Do you welcome feedback on the programming you provide?”*

MHTTC Network reviews and utilizes feedback compiled from participants of our MHTTC programming. We utilize a variety of evaluation tools and metrics to compile feedback from our constituents to ensure the development of quality training, technical assistance, resources and products that address the needs of the mental health workforce across the nation. Your voice is crucial to our success!



*“Do you offer programming to support children and youth who display symptoms of mental health disorders?”*

The MHTTC Network supports the mental health and school mental health workforce with the identification of mental health issues among children and adolescents. The rise in depression, anxiety, and death by suicide among children and adolescents in the United States is alarming, resulting in the need for services from professionals who are educated, culturally informed, and properly equipped to address the presenting issues with confidence. Our Network supports the mental health workforce by providing access to exemplars and subject matter expertise to help implement practices and provide ongoing resources and support. It is important to our Network to develop and reinforce cross-sector and community-based collaborations — not just with mental health service providers, but with parents, community navigators, promotoras, youth peer networks, and anyone else willing to promote the mental health and wellness of children and youth who experience mental health challenges.



Through our School Mental Health Initiative, the MHTTC Network aims to accelerate the implementation of effective mental health services in schools. Our school mental health programming addresses key issues, including: development and implementation of comprehensive school mental health systems, trauma-informed care, suicide prevention to postvention, mental health disparities and impacts of racial violence on students, retention and recruitment of school mental health professionals, mental health of tribal students, students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, LGBTQ+ students, and Hispanic and Latino students. Learn more about our School Mental Health Initiative [here](#).

*“I don’t like talking about politics. DEI programs support political agendas, don’t they?”*

The MHTTC Network is a non-partisan organization. Our training, technical assistance activities, resources and products are available to everyone. In the code of conduct used by the Network, our MHTTC values are presented. The code states the following:

*“We are dedicated to providing events where everyone, regardless of gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disabilities, neurodiversity, physical appearance, body size, ethnicity, nationality, race, age, religion and any other-intersectional identities feels welcome. We invite everyone to help us achieve a safe, respectful, inclusive and positive environment for learning. When you participate in an event hosted by us you are contributing to the overall experience which makes us accountable to each other.”*

*“Why should diversity, equity and inclusion be of importance to me? I hear DEI programs are not very effective?”*

We firmly believe all of us play a role in developing fair and equitable communities. Through our work and MHTTC-developed programming, we believe we are helping our communities grow stronger. Diversity, equity and inclusion efforts not only raise awareness, but also lead to better mental health outcomes.

DEI efforts work toward eliminating barriers to access and utilization of care services that facilitate recovery, wellbeing, and healing. At the MHTTC Network, each of our learning settings (whether virtual, face-to-face, or web-based) as well as our learning modalities (e.g., learning communities, online courses, communities of practice, learning collaboratives) are created with the intention to be inviting, welcoming, diverse, and inclusive safe spaces to learn. MHTTC programming acknowledges and openly discusses the impact diversity, equity, and inclusion have on mental health and wellbeing. By creating welcoming solution-oriented spaces, we model the values of inclusion for all.

[The Role of Mental Health in DEI | Uprise Health](#)

[Diversity and Inclusion in Psychiatry: The Pursuit of Health Equity](#)