

# Empowerline Forum Series: Fostering Health Equity in Our Communities

## - GLOSSARY OF TERMS -

**Ageism** is the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of age. Ageism is a widespread, insidious practice which has harmful effects on the health of older adults as they are overlooked for employment, restricted from social services, and stereotyped in the media.

**Cultural Competence** is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.

**Cultural Humility** is an ongoing, lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby individuals learn not only about other cultures, but also examine their own beliefs and cultural identities, and consider their own assumptions, biases, and values and how they have shaped experience.

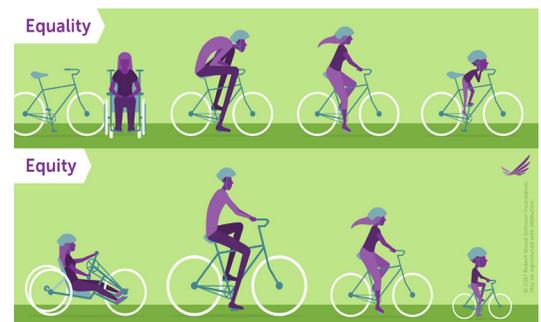
**Equity vs. Equality** *Equity* involves trying to understand and give people what they need to enjoy full, healthy lives. *Equality*, in contrast, aims to ensure that everyone gets the same things in order to enjoy full, healthy lives. Like equity, equality aims to promote fairness and justice, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same things.

**Diversity** means that each individual is unique, and groups of individuals reflect multiple dimensions of difference, including: race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, cognitive styles, and much more. Valuing diversity means embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of differences that exist in groups.

**Ethnicity** is a social construct that divides people into social groups based on characteristics like shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical bases. Examples of different ethnic groups are: Cape Verdean, African-American (Black); Chinese, Vietnamese (Asian); Cherokee, Navajo (Native American); Cuban, Puerto Rican (Latino); Polish, Swedish (white).

**Health Disparities vs. Healthy Inequities** *Health disparities* mean the same thing as *health inequalities*: differences in the presence of disease, health outcomes, or access to healthcare among population groups. *Health inequities*, meanwhile, are differences in health that are not only unnecessary and avoidable, but also unfair and unjust. Health inequities are rooted in social injustices that make some population groups more vulnerable to poor health than other groups.

**Health Equity** is assurance of the conditions for optimal health for all people. Achieving health equity requires valuing all individuals and populations equally, recognizing and rectifying historical injustices, and addressing contemporary injustices by providing resources according to need.



**Homophobia** encompasses a range of negative attitudes and feelings toward people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Homophobia is associated with prejudice and anger that leads to discrimination in such areas as employment, housing, and legal rights, and is observable in critical and hostile behavior such as violence on the basis of sexual orientation.

**Implicit Bias**, also known as unconscious or hidden bias, are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness. Studies have indicated that implicit biases affect individuals' attitudes and actions, creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that they hold these biases.

**Inclusion** is 1. A value and practice of ensuring that people feel they belong and that their input is valued by the whole, particularly regarding decisions that affect their lives, and 2. authentically bringing traditionally-excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision-/policy-making in a way that shares power.

**Intersectionality** contends that classifications such as gender, race, class, and others cannot be examined in isolation; they interact and intersect in individuals' lives and are mutually constitutive. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way a white woman does.

**Isms** are systems of privilege and oppression based on social identities, including, but not limited to: race (racism), sex (sexism), class (classism), age (ageism), ability (ableism), and sexual identity (heterosexism). All are rooted in doctrines of superiority and inferiority, find systemic expression in individual, institutional, as well as cultural forms, and function through the dynamics of power and privilege.

**Microaggressions** are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

**Race** is a socially-constructed way of grouping people based on skin color and other apparent physical differences, which has no genetic or scientific basis. This social construct was created to justify social and economic oppression of people of color by whites. An important thing to note is that while race is a social construct with no genetic or scientific basis, it has real social meaning.

**Race Equity** is achieved when you can't predict advantage and disadvantage by race.

**Racism** is a system of oppression based on the socially-constructed concept of race exercised by the dominant racial groups (whites) over non-dominant racial groups; this system justifies social, political, and economic hierarchy. Racism operates on four dimensions:

1. **Internalized Racism** Private racial beliefs held by individuals. Examples: prejudice, internalized oppression, and internalized privilege
2. **Interpersonal Racism** How we act upon our racial beliefs when we interact with others. Examples: bias, bigotry, hate speech, and violence
3. **Institutional Racism** Racial inequities within institutions and systems of power. An example: school systems that provide unequal opportunities for people of different races
4. **Structural Racism** Racial bias across institutions and society. An example: The racial wealth gap reflects the cumulative effects of racial inequities.

**Sexism** is prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex.