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*Information, Referral, Education, Supported Employment and Rehabilitation  
Services  
Serving Central and Eastern Massachusetts*

## Diversity & Cultural Competency

Reviewed: January 2017/18/19

**ASA is committed to expanding the participation rates of people of diverse backgrounds who have disabilities in advocacy efforts and every aspect of life.**

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Our commitment to equity, opportunity and inclusion for all people with disabilities has led ASA to become fully invested in empowering persons of diverse cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds with disabilities and their families. Persons of diverse backgrounds with disabilities often face multiple barriers, including access to services and supports and discrimination in community, education and employment settings. Research indicates that, while people with disabilities face enhanced challenges, those of diverse backgrounds are disproportionately affected. They face higher incarceration rates, over-representation in segregated special education programs and diminished social and employment outcomes, among other things.

ASA recognizes the value of diversity and what it means to embrace cultural and linguistic competency. We believe individuals of diverse backgrounds must be supported by public and organizational policy and practices in order to achieve full inclusion. This acknowledgement, support and advocacy of diversity is essential to attaining positive outcomes for people with disabilities, and building a sense of community. For this reason, ASA contains in its policies and procedures, in its consumer handbook and in its participation in individual service plan team meetings and in its mission philosophy the connection of persons of diverse backgrounds with disabilities to the organizations, services and supports that lead to community inclusion and positive life outcomes.

ASA is committed to cultural and linguistic competency, and we have shed light on the issues, policies and practices that impact people of diverse backgrounds with disabilities. But real cultural competency isn't achieved through an article, event or webinar. It is achieved by embracing the differences in us all, celebrating our unique contributions and supporting equity in access, services and outcomes for all people.

ASA is commitment to equity, opportunity and inclusion for people of diverse backgrounds with disabilities and their families in accessing services and supports offered by ASA and numerous other organizations.

Plan:

- 1) ASA reviews its cultural competency and diversity policy and plan within the context of its Accessibility and Strategic Plans which reviews on an annual basis the attitudinal issues of diversity, culture, age, gender, sexual orientation, spiritual beliefs, socioeconomic status, and language. If barriers in these areas are noted, recommendations for their remediation are made and implemented. In addition, our ongoing monthly staff meetings presented by management includes an orientation to diversity and cultural competency.

2) Some specific ongoing ASA staff training areas related to diversity and cultural competency include the following:

- dietary restrictions such as, vegan, kosher meal, gluten free diets, low sugar diets, lactose free diets;
- the observance of religious holidays and cultural customs regarding dress and communication;
- staff training for both genders in fulfilling the bathroom needs for both male and female participants;
- staff training for both genders in fulfilling restraint training needs;
- individual communication modalities, whether verbal, signing or dyna box.
- The staff meetings review the individual cultural and diversity needs as mentioned above, and service plans take into consideration these specialized needs.

Therefore the cultural and diversity plan for all staff and those served are addressed and integrated in ASA's personnel policies, program policies, accessibility plan, strategic plan, SWOT analysis and individual service plans for those served. As such cultural diversity and competency permeates the ethos of the entire organization.

## Diversity Awareness

### What is diversity?

Diversity includes all if the ways human beings are both alike and different. It allows us to connect with others that have the same characteristics and at the same time the ability to learn from one another about the differences and to value our commonalities and differences.

### You and Your Similarities and Differences.

<b>Internal</b>	<b>External</b>	<b>Organizational</b>
Age	Religion	Department
Race	Income	Work Location
Gender and Gender Orientation	Personal and Recreational Habits	Management Status
Ethnicity	Educational background	Job Functions
Physical Ability	Marital status	

### Cultural Norms and Values

<b>Aspects Of Culture</b>	<b>Mainstream American Culture</b>	<b>Other Cultures</b>
Communication & Language	Explicit and Direct	Implicit and Indirect
Food and Eating Habits	Eating is necessary-Fast food	Dining is a Social Experience, Religious Rules
Work Habits	Emphasis on Task	Emphasis on Relationships