

Evolving Towards Equity Q4 Reading

Table of Contents

Towards Equitable Change	1
Social Model Of Disability.....	2
Human Rights Model Of Disability	3
Civil Rights & Social Change.....	5
Confronting Injustice In Real-Time.....	7
Building A More Inclusive Future	11
Actual Allyship: How To Stand Up For Disability Rights.....	12
Our Vision Of The Future.....	13
Thank You!.....	14

TOWARDS EQUITABLE CHANGE

All of us have learned to think about disability in different ways. As we’ve previously explored through earlier sections of *Evolving Towards Equity*, many of these ways of thinking are problematic and often harmful. To-date, the *Evolving Towards Equity* materials have centered around conceptual models of disability. Conceptual models of disability are mental frameworks that inform (even unintentionally) how we think about disability and how we act towards people with disabilities.

Previous readings of *Evolving Towards Equity* focused on conceptual models that ultimately are rooted in problematic beliefs still persistent in society today. This section explores the Social and Human Rights Models, which begin to reframe and correct the lens through which society has often viewed people with disabilities. But equity will not be achieved solely by completing this *Evolving Towards Equity* training series. To influence meaningful change, we must turn our newly acquired knowledge into sustainable action. In the following text, you will discover tangible ways to make strides towards equitable change in our communities, which is both long overdue and absolutely necessary.

Content Warning: Medical Ableism; Oppression; Systemic Racism; Identity Erasure



SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

The Social Model of disability represented an important shift in how society can choose to perceive disability and people with disabilities. Although first developed in the 1980s and 1990s, the Social Model has not yet gained significant traction within programs, services, and general public consciousness in the U.S. context.

The Social Model flips the narrative created by the Medical Model. Instead of believing that an individual's impairment is the sole problem needing to be addressed, the Social Model of disability asserts that it is societal barriers and structures that must be addressed. In other words, there is nothing about disabled people that needs changing, rather, it's society that must change. As activist Susan Wendell says, what needs curing is ableism, not the bodies or minds of people with disabilities.¹

The Social Model helps us make an important distinction between the social and individual functions of disability. Researchers such as Jenny Morris to assert that people with disabilities are "people with impairments who are disabled by society."²

Impairment: A characteristic, feature or attribute within an individual which is long term and may or may not be the result of disease or injury and may

1. Affect that individual's appearance in a way which is not acceptable to society, and/or
2. Affect the functioning of that individual's mind or body, either because of, or regardless of society.

Disability: The disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a society which takes little or no account of people who have impairments and thus excludes them from mainstream activity. (Therefore, disability, like racism or sexism, is discrimination and social oppression).³

When using the Social Model as the lens through which we view disability, we have the opportunity to say: there's nothing about people with disabilities that needs to change – it's society and inaccessible social structures that needs to change.

¹ Wendell, Susan. 2009. "Unhealthy disabled: treating chronic illnesses as disability." Quoted in Sara Goering (2015). Goering's article is available online at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4596173/>.

² Morris, Jenny. 2001. p. 3.

³ Morris, Jenny. 2001. "Impairment and disability: constructing an ethics of care which promotes human rights." Article available online at: <https://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/morris-constructing-an-ethics-of-care-which-promotes-human-rights.pdf>.

The Social Model represented huge progress towards equity and access for persons with disabilities, and still has the capacity to radically change the way people with and without disabilities think about disability. However, the Human Rights Model of disability builds on the progress made by the Social Model. The Human Rights Model not only recognizes barriers created by society, but also seeks to hold those in power accountable to upholding the equal rights of people with disabilities. We'll explore the Human Rights Model next, and along the way we'll need to continue asking ourselves critical questions.

HUMAN RIGHTS MODEL OF DISABILITY

The Human Rights Model of disability is one of the most recent ways dominant culture has come to understand disability. The Human Rights Model is different from the Social Model. The Social Model did signify a fundamental and important paradigm shift in how society interprets disability and treats people with disabilities. However, the Social Model primarily stayed at the theoretical level of explaining disability and prescribing reasons for why people with disabilities are excluded from society (because of oppression, segregation and discrimination.) An important contribution of the Human Rights Model of disability is that it makes a call to action – to governments and decision-makers – and explicitly acknowledges the human dignity of disabled people.⁴

If the Social Model recognizes that people with disabilities are often not able to enjoy their equal rights to accessing, living, and thriving in their own communities, the Human Rights Model goes further and also details *other* basic human rights that people with disabilities are entitled to, just as non-disabled people are.

The Human Rights Model builds upon the Social Model by acknowledging that “mainstream barriers in society are only one part of the puzzle, and that even once these barriers have been removed, people with disabilities may still need a range of supports in order to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others.”⁵ The Human Rights Model asserts that people with disabilities have the exact same rights as everyone else in society, and acknowledges that disability is a natural reflection of human diversity and variation.

While the Human Rights Model represented progress by building upon the Social Model, the Human Rights Model itself too can be (and has been) bettered and built upon. Many argue that the Human Rights Model falls short in understanding how systems of oppression get in the way of equal access to equal rights. Just because rights are written down in law doesn't mean laws are necessarily followed, or that all individuals and groups have equal access to those “equal rights.” Other social movements, such as the Disability Justice movement, continue building upon these and other models of disability, towards a

⁴ Degener, Theresia. 2014. “A human rights model of disability.”

⁵ *Ibid.*

more equal, just and inclusive society for all intersectional individual and group identities.

Global Disability Rights Beyond the U.S.

Disability is not limited to the United States, and neither are disability rights. In fact, according to 2010 population estimates, there are over 1 billion people in the world (or 15% of the global population) who have some type of disability.⁶ In the early 2000s, disability advocates from around the world began planning and meeting to draft an international human rights treaty for people with disabilities. International treaties are signed onto at the United Nations by governments who promise to uphold the rights and obligations found in the treaty. One of these treaties is the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which entered into force in 2008.⁷

The CRPD contains about 30 human rights of people with disabilities. Many of these human rights relate directly to the work we do in the disability services sector, including, but not limited to:

- Work and employment
- Accessibility
- Living independently and being included in the community

Other human rights of people with disabilities found in the CRPD include the rights to:

- Non-discrimination
- Equal recognition before the law
- Access to justice
- Education
- Respect of home and the family
- Participate in political, public, and cultural life

Note: The United States has yet to ratify the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and has one of the worst track records of human rights treaty ratification in the world.¹

⁶ World Health Organization, 2011. "World Report on Disability" Available online at: https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report/en/.

⁷ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Entry into Force." Accessed online at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/entry-into-force.html>.

CIVIL RIGHTS & SOCIAL CHANGE

Early Disability-led Advocacy in the U.S.

As we've learned through earlier sections of *Evolving Towards Equity*, we unfortunately can summarize the history of treatment of people with disabilities in America with the words: exploitation, experimentation, extermination, sterilization, institutionalization, and segregation. Today, we can look back 50 or 100 years ago and recognize this treatment as abuse of basic human and civil rights. But, at the time, these processes of treatment towards people with disabilities were very common and often encouraged practices by official laws and regulations and unofficial "best practices." However, there were many people with disabilities, as well as their family members, friends, and allies, who spoke out in real-time against these human and civil rights abuses of disabled people, as well as against discriminatory policies and practices.

Although people with disabilities and their allies have been fighting for equality and non-discrimination for centuries, the disability rights movement as we know it – advocating for non-discrimination, equal access, and civil rights such as in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or the Americans with Disabilities Act – has only made it into national consciousness in relatively recent history.

A significant marker of the disability rights movement is that disabled activists and their allies, beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, "borrowed inspiration, ideology, and strategy from other social justice movements."⁸ In doing so, people with disabilities in the U.S. "began to assert such rights as self-determination and equal accommodations."⁹ During the 1970s in the United States, the disability rights movement, led by disabled people, was gaining traction and winning social-political battles for accessibility and inclusion. Below are just a few early disabled activists and advocates you should know:

- Ed Roberts
- Anita Cameron
- Judith Heumann
- Michael Winter
- Corbett O'Toole
- Pat Wright
- Susan Sygall
- Gunnar Dybwad

⁸ Gill, Carol J. PhD. 1994. "A Bicultural Framework for Understanding Disability." *The Family Psychologist*. p. 13-16.

⁹ *Ibid.*

By the mid-1970s, disability rights activists were fighting for equal rights to access and inclusion – including advocating for changes “in the built environment to enable more independence [for people with disabilities].” This included curb cuts in sidewalks, and also “wheelchair lifts on buses, ramps alongside staircases, elevators with reachable buttons in public buildings, accessible bathrooms, and service counters low enough to let a person in a wheelchair be attended to face-to-face,” and even more.¹⁰

National Movements & Moments

Despite the challenges of evolving towards equity, history has shown that societies and cultures can change. Culture is not static, rather the values and dominant social narratives that make up societies are dynamic and change over time.

As a society, we often have an evolving understanding of what is “right” and “wrong,” and are quick to judge past actions deemed as unjust without also examining our own role within present-day injustices. For example, we are often taught about how racism, ableism, or sexism “looked then,” rather than how these systems of oppression “look today.” Even less often do we take the time to fully understand how we ourselves as individuals and groups contribute to and benefit from those systems.

As time progresses, history has shown us that who is leading change, and how that change is created, is heavily judged by mainstream/dominant society. Generally speaking, we tend to be more comfortable with gentle and peaceful approaches regardless of the injustice or unspeakable circumstances communities are facing. In other words, despite how desperately our communities fail people, we expect marginalized peoples to follow the rules and be polite in their quest to fight for their basic rights.

Reflect on the critical contributions to U.S. culture below, where disruptive activists from other marginalized identity groups spoke truth to power. How do you recall (or imagine) their actions were received, and more importantly, weren't their actions justified considering the dire circumstances they faced?

- [Pauli Murray](#), co-authored “Jane Crow and the Law” in 1965 about sexism and racism.
- [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), launched “Project C” in 1962 aimed at targeting white businesses in Birmingham who profited off of Black patrons, but offered discriminatory services.
- [Betty Friedan](#), authored “The Feminine Mystique” in 1963 exploring gender roles and

¹⁰ 99% Invisible. Episode 308 – Curb Cuts. Accessed online at: <https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/curb-cuts/>.

women's right to choose their path.

During these critical moments that advanced human rights, those who weren't working alongside these American activists often fell into two groups: those who were silent and therefore complicit, or those who were openly critical of these activists and therefore in support of on-going oppression.

This is significant to society now, as we continue still today to replicate these same harmful patterns. A critical shift would require us all to learn to question our personal and societal responses to present day demands for change, and critically consider where our individual actions align.

CONFRONTING INJUSTICE IN REAL-TIME

It is tempting to claim being an “ally” or “champion of equity and inclusion,” though these are roles reserved for folks who earn those titles through action. In order for us to participate in advancing change (and living into those esteemed roles), we must understand what needs to change first. The following sections will explore common ways present-day injustice and inequity continues to permeate everyday resources and block the rights of disabled members of our society.

Inequity in Healthcare – COVID-19

As of August 2021, over 616,000 Americans have died from complications of COVID-19, caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. In July 2020, it was estimated at the time that “of the 43% of COVID-19 deaths attributed to congregate facilities, almost 100% are disabled people.”¹¹

As if that number is not sobering enough, at the early onset of the pandemic's spread in the U.S., multiple states had provisions in their laws that fueled the real fears of people with disabilities and their families that ventilators would be medically rationed—to deny care to disabled and/or chronically ill people. Since the onset of the pandemic, little has been done to ease those real fears of many people with disabilities. In fact, in Alabama, until the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) intervened in April 2020, the state maintained crisis standards of care that allowed for the denial of “ventilator services to individuals based on the presence of intellectual disabilities, including ‘profound mental retardation’ and ‘moderate to severe dementia.’”¹² This is just

¹¹ Frost, Stephen. July 6, 2020. “Deadly Discrimination: The Forgotten Impact Of Covid-19 On People With Disabilities.” Accessed online at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sfrost/2020/07/06/deadly-discrimination/#1b4cc68b2b93>.

¹² Bagenstos, Samuel R. May 27, 2020. “Who Gets the Ventilator? Disability Discrimination in COVID-19 Medical-Rationing Protocols.” *The Yale Law Journal*. Accessed online at:

one example that reflects the staggering statistic that *more than 82 percent* of physicians in the United States “believe that people with significant disabilities have worse quality of life than nondisabled people.”¹³

Inequity in Policing – Access to Justice

The exact numbers of people with disabilities whose lives are taken by police each year are not systematically tracked, but it is estimated that “between one third to one half of all Americans killed by police have [some form of physical, developmental, intellectual, psychiatric, or emotional] disability.”¹⁴ For perspective on this deadly disproportionate impact – that’s an estimate of between 33-50% of total police killings involve someone with a disability – whereas the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that one in four or 25% of American adults have a disability.¹⁵

The majority of the people with disabilities who are killed by police are people of color – disproportionately Black people and Indigenous people.¹⁶ Additionally, due to a variety of social and environmental factors – such as environmental racism¹⁷ and disparities in access to healthcare – people of color in the U.S. are actually more likely to have a disability (whether that’s a chronic medical condition, physical disability, or mental illness).^{18,19}

Furthermore, people with disabilities are too often denied equal access to the criminal justice system.²⁰ At the same time, people with disabilities are more likely than non-

<https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/who-gets-the-ventilator>.

¹³ Gallegos, Andrés J. April 1, 2021. “Misperceptions Of People With Disabilities Lead To Low-Quality Care: How Policy Makers Can Counter The Harm And Injustice.” *Health Affairs*. Available online at: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20210325.480382/full/>.

¹⁴ Bradley, Dominic and Sarah Katz. June 9, 2020. “Sandra Bland, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray: the toll of police violence on disabled Americans.” *The Guardian*. Accessed online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/09/sandra-bland-eric-garner-freddie-gray-the-toll-of-police-violence-on-disabled-americans>.

¹⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2018. “CDC: 1 in 4 US adults live with a disability.” Accessed online at: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2018/p0816-disability.html>.

¹⁶ Bradley, Dominic and Sarah Katz. June 9, 2020.

¹⁷ Lakhani, Nina. October 21, 2019. “Our unequal earth: ‘Racism dictates who gets dumped on’: how environmental injustice divides the world.” Accessed online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/21/what-is-environmental-injustice-and-why-is-the-guardian-covering-it>.

¹⁸ Bradley, Dominic and Sarah Katz. June 9, 2020.

¹⁹ Abrams, Abigail. June 25, 2020. “Black, Disabled and at Risk: The Overlooked Problem of Police Violence Against Americans with Disabilities.” Available online at: <https://time.com/5857438/police-violence-black-disabled/>.

²⁰ The Arc & AAIDD. 2014. “Position Statement: Criminal Justice System.” Available online at: <https://thearc.org/wp-content/uploads/forchapters/2014CriminalJustice.pdf>.

disabled people “to experience victimization, be arrested, be charged with a crime, and serve longer prison sentences once convicted.”²¹

Inequity in Education – Exclusion

There are many well-documented barriers to equal access in education for students with disabilities. “Some barriers for children with disabilities’ education include the misuse of funding, poor assessments, limited training for teachers, and poor collaboration between schools and caregivers. Students with disabilities struggle to gain access for special education services due to eligibility barriers. Furthermore, misdiagnosis causes children with disabilities to be villainized and forced into the school-to-prison pipeline.”^{22, 23}

“Disability in Higher Education – A Social Justice Approach” by Nancy J. Evans, Ellen M. Broido, Kirsten R. Brown, Autumn K. Wilke speaks to the challenges disabled college students still face today, “Many institutions focus solely on legal access and accommodation, enabling a system of exclusion and oppression. However, using principles of universal design, social justice, and other inclusive practices, campus environments can be transformed into more inclusive and equitable settings for all constituents.”

Together, their work ultimately explores how following the law to the letter is the minimum, but to achieve justice, intentional approaches need to be taken in order to ensure students are able to enjoy equitable experiences.

Inequity in Employment – Overt Discrimination

Access to equitable employment continues to be a critical issue. Despite overwhelming evidence to illustrate that inaccessibility and biased attitudes are commonplace in U.S. workplaces, employment equity and inclusion struggles forward for job-seekers and employees with disabilities as many of the areas outlined as illegal in Title VII still remain commonplace at work today.

In addition to minimal understanding of disability employment law, pervasive stigma, and documented patterns of overt discrimination all across the country, basic data paints an undeniable picture of the areas we need to focus on now. People without disabilities are 2x as likely to be employed, while people with disabilities make approximately \$28,000 less

²¹ The Arc. “Disability & The Criminal Justice System.” Available online at: <https://thearc.org/our-initiatives/criminal-justice/>.

²² Hernandez, Jaqueline, Daisy Limon, Nayeli Perez and Janette Rodriguez. August 1, 2019. “Continuing Barriers in Special Education.” Available online at: <https://naswcanews.org/continuing-barriers-in-special-education/>.

²³ ACLU. 2020. “Police in Schools Continue to Target Black, Brown & Indigenous Students with Disabilities.” <https://www.aclu.org/news/criminal-law-reform/police-in-schools-continue-to-target-black-brown-and-indigenous-students-with-disabilities/>.

per year and are more than 2x as likely to live below the poverty line. If employers widely recognized their responsibility in impacting those numbers by addressing attitudes, non-compliance, and inequitable practices, employment equity would begin to progress at a more dignified and reasonable rate.

Inequity in Community – Inaccessibility

As discussed throughout *Evolving Towards Equity*, our communities were not built with people with disabilities in mind. For that reason, most spaces remain inaccessible. Erin Hawley of Easterseals Thrive describes the daily burden of holding her community accountable to her rights as a disabled person, just to exist in spaces that were not designed with ableist mindsets. Erin went on to say, “I imagine a fully accessible public transit system with adequate room for wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Curb cuts on every corner, and paved sidewalks. A ramp in every home. Captions and audio descriptions for movie theaters. ASL interpreters at events. Quiet rooms. Braille restaurant menus. The list goes on.”²⁴

Inaccessibility goes beyond physical access – think also about digital and policy accessibility barriers. Furthermore, interpersonal inaccessibility and attitudinal barriers to access must be addressed if we want our communities to be accessible to *all* people with and without disabilities. In other words, “it is not only buildings that can be inaccessible; people can also be inaccessible, too.”²⁵

Inequity in Self-Determination – Guardianship

Guardianship is a state legal process in which “a court removes some or many of the legal and decision-making rights from an individual and transfers all or some of them to another person, called a guardian or conservator.”²⁶ Guardianship is common in the United States. As of 2018, it was estimated that 1.5 million people were under legal guardianship across the country, with that number expected to have increased.²⁷ Most guardianships are full guardianships, which means that “guardians have full decision-making powers over the person under guardianship.”²⁸

²⁴ Hawley, Erin. “Accessibility Means Being Part of The Community.” Available online at: <https://blog.easterseals.com/accessible-communities-isolation/>.

²⁵ Sweet, Mark. 2018. “Access from an Interpersonal Angle.” Available online at: <http://www.disabilityrightswi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Access-from-an-Interpersonal-Angle.pdf>.

²⁶ National Council on Disability. June 10, 2019. “Turning Rights into Reality: How Guardianship and Alternatives Impact the Autonomy of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.” p. 23. Available online at: https://ncd.gov/sites/default/files/NCD_Turning-Rights-into-Reality_508_0.pdf.

²⁷ Center for Disability Rights, Inc. October 2018. “Policy Position: Adult Guardianship.” Available online at: <https://cdrnys.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/guardianship.pdf>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Many individuals and organizations are critical of guardianship, and view guardianship as a restriction of a person's rights to self-determination. This is because guardianship can result in a person's right to make decisions about healthcare, or the right to vote being taken away altogether. There are alternatives to guardianship – such as Supported Decision-Making – which are widely preferred by disability rights organizations, many I/DD advocacy organizations, and many disabled people themselves.²⁹

It is important for us to create space to honor people's individual opinions and decisions; regardless of their guardianship status. Guardianship should never result in a person's dignity not being upheld or respected.

Conclusion

As you have likely come to realize, there are countless ways all around us that we as allies and champions of disability inclusion can get involved in order to fully realize the future and communities we all deserve.

BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE

There is much more work to be done in building a more inclusive future, together. But there are already many people with disabilities, advocates, and activists who are doing the work that we can join in. Below are just a few samples of current disability-related issues that you can follow, learn more about, or take action.

There are many changes that have already been advocated or are being worked tirelessly on that seek to protect and promote the rights of people with disabilities – both in Minnesota and the U.S. more broadly. This is a process of continuously striving to evolve towards equity, and this has been and is currently happening in our communities outside of the sector of disability services. Below are some links of current happenings towards equity and true inclusion.

Opportunities for Action

Evolving Towards Equity centers on amplifying the lived experience of disabled people – which is central to disability inclusion. To stay aligned with that central philosophy, below are perspectives of people who are leading the transformation of our communities and re-envisioning what's possible.

- Healthcare – [Combating Discriminatory Bias in Medicine](#)
- Policing – [Alternatives to Calling Police in Mental Health Crisis](#)

²⁹ Disability Rights Wisconsin. 2018. "Let's Talk About Supporting Individuals to Live Full Lives with Supported Decision-Making." Available online at: http://www.disabilityrightswi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Lets_talk_SDM_English.pdf.

- Education – [10 Tips for Changing Education](#)
- Employment – [Pay Equity & Ending Legal Subminimum Wage](#)
- Community – [Accessible Planning & Community Design](#)
- Guardianship – [Supported Decision Making](#)

ACTUAL ALLYSHIP: HOW TO STAND UP FOR DISABILITY RIGHTS

We must intentionally be thinking about equity and inclusion when considering how we want to stand up for disability rights. It is so very common for businesses and organizations to make sweeping claims about diversity, equity and inclusion in internal and external statements, but if organizations and individuals want to continue to tout how inclusive and equitable they are, there is corresponding critical work that is needed to get there.

A critical shift would be to use newly acquired knowledge to be more accountable to the communities we support. For example, if you're going to meet with your legislators, go there alongside people with disabilities, but not just for self-serving or business needs. Advocating for outdated service models perpetuates old ways of thinking, and fails to intentionally account for changing resources, perspectives, and supports.

We must also be thinking of intersectionality when advocating for legal/policy changes that promote equity, dignity and human rights. Many current laws and structures were set up to intentionally marginalize people, and we must center multiply marginalized people when standing up for disability rights. We need to use this moment in history to keep evolving towards equity for people with disabilities, making our communities accessible and inclusive for *all* people.

Allyship in Action

If you seek to be an ally for disability rights and inclusion, there are many ways we all can join alongside those with disabilities who have been doing this work for decades. Lifeworks developed the four resources linked below, each designed to support you in your work to become a more intentional ally to people with disabilities. These resources are found on www.lifeworks.org, so feel free to share widely with your personal and professional circles.

- [Say This, Not That: A Guide to Disability Terminology](#)
- [From Education to Action: A Guide to Disability Allyship](#)
- [Conceptual Models of Disability: Assumptions and Examples](#)
- [Unjust Situations: Prompts for Reflection](#)

OUR VISION OF THE FUTURE

The underlying philosophy of *Evolving Towards Equity* offerings, is that people with disabilities can do anything. *Evolving Towards Equity* is striving for a society where we no longer separate people either within our minds or within our community based on ability. We no longer have issues with people with disabilities being next to us at baseball games. We no longer have issues with kids with disabilities at birthday parties. We no longer have issues with people with disabilities supervising us. *Evolving Towards Equity* is pushing to have a better society where we progress together to address our own bias so that we no longer hinder the inclusion of people with disabilities.

We believe disability inclusion is necessary as a means to advance human rights for all people. We acknowledge significant change takes time, and it is our intention to continue moving the dial until we reach the tomorrow we want to see today. In order to do that, we will set the bar high, never settle for less, and keep using truth, influence, and passion to drive our work. The following are our goals which are the foundation and guiding light of *Evolving Towards Equity*:

- Fight against discrimination, bias, stigma, and ableist thought, while simultaneously supporting inclusion, accommodation, and universal design principles.
- Influence the disability services sector by challenging the relevance and equity of services that hinder independence and perpetuate stereotypes, and advocates that resources be put into programming focused on requiring accessibility and inclusion.
- Facilitate a more holistic narrative around disability concepts for employees, coworkers, and community members.
- Exemplify what nonprofits should strive to be, which is created for the people by the people. No longer will organizations speak for and represent populations that they do not reflect.
- Raise the bar for the disability services sector and model how it is possible to re-create systems originally built to be exclusionary for cultural groups.
- Lobby for a more inclusive community for people with disabilities of all cultural backgrounds, shaping policy initiatives and setting the agenda.
- Because disability is the most intersectional dimension of diversity, through *Evolving Towards Equity* and other offerings, the community will learn about other dimensions of diversity become more aware and inclusive overall.
- Dismantle stigma and barriers based on bias by re-creating the narrative about people with disabilities by people with disabilities.
- Remove remnants of segregation based on ability so they no longer linger in modern society.

THANK YOU!

Thank you for participating in Lifeworks' *Evolving Towards Equity* training series! We are so excited you were able to be a part of this learning experience. You just read our vision, which we wrote as a team in 2019, when *Evolving Towards Equity* was just getting started. It has been such a privilege for us to co-create this space with you. We feel this experience is just the beginning of our organizational journey towards the more equitable future we envision.

We are always here to talk if there is anything from the trainings that you would like to process, or deep dive into how the content applies to the work we do. Our hope is that after experiencing the *Evolving Towards Equity* training series, you are leaving with a reimagined commitment to our work. Collectively, we have a unique opportunity to build a more inclusive, equitable future for *all people* in our communities.

Thank you again for evolving together alongside us!

Sincerely,



Ashley Oolman

Lifeworks Disability Inclusion Consultant



Alli Strong-Martin

Lifeworks Disability Inclusion Consultant