



## **Title**

What Does Diversity Mean When We All Look The Same?

## **Presenters**

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## **Date of presentation**

August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

## **Objectives**

- Describe the importance of authentically engaging community members in prevention efforts
- Define the relationship between key concepts including equity, diversity and inclusion
- List steps in a process to identifying diverse population groups in your community to engage in prevention efforts
- Discuss how to increase inclusivity through organizational practices, policies and structure
- Identify short term action steps to support developing a diverse and inclusive coalition

## **Session Description**

Prevention coalitions are encouraged to build a diverse and inclusive membership that reflects the composition of the communities served. Doing so helps ensure representation of the perspectives necessary to identify and respond to substance misuse-related problems and consequences most effectively, and to prevent or intervene to address existing health inequities and disparities. Yet, coalition leaders and members often struggle to build more inclusive coalitions. Why? Many coalitions have made concerted efforts to connect with and engage members of these groups only to find the 'same ten people' around the table at every meeting. Still, more may have had limited success in their outreach efforts but struggled to build authentic relationships and provide meaningful and mutually-beneficial opportunities for participation. For some coalitions, challenges exist to identifying and engaging diverse or impacted populations within, what appear to be, racially or ethnically homogenous communities. When communities appear to be racially and/or ethnically homogenous, how can coalitions identify and understand the rich diversity within their communities, regardless of what the demographics indicate? How can they then engage members of these cultural groups as new partners to help identify



inequities, address health disparities, identify resiliency factors, and center equity in their prevention approaches?

The Northeast and Caribbean PTTC and the National Hispanic and Latino PTTC have each hosted several customized training sessions to provide guidance for prevention practitioners working at the local, regional, state, and national level on building more diverse and inclusive coalitions. These trainings explored and expanded upon key concepts relating to health equity, diversity and inclusion; and reviewed a step-wise process for coalitions to use to gain greater understanding of the diversity dimensions present within their communities. These sessions also described how prevention practitioners can support their partners in learning about their own cultural identities and practice cultural humility, in assessing the inclusivity of their organization's practices, policies and structure, and in implementing concrete and actionable strategies to make their organizations more welcoming, regardless of the demographic composition of their community.

**How this workshop ties into the overall NPN 2021 conference theme (The Power of HOPE: Healthy Opportunities for Prevention to Empower Change)?**

Participating in community-change efforts enhances the collective health of a community, and benefits those that are directly involved in/affected by the process(es). Many coalitions are challenged by a limited understanding of what it means to be a diverse community. Some focus on engaging members of 'visibly diverse' cultural groups in their efforts, thereby missing the opportunity to take a broader and more expansive view of diversity that would bring a greater richness to their prevention planning efforts. Expanding our notions of diversity would create additional opportunities for bringing vital community voices, perspectives, and experiences to our prevention tables.