

CHAPTER SUCCESS GUIDE: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION



Building Healthy Communities for Every Student

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are key focus areas of an Active Minds chapter. Mental health impacts people from all walks of life, and it's essential to be thoughtful and deliberate about ensuring that your programming is inclusive and accessible to all. While we all have mental health, it's discussed and treated differently among different communities and cultures, and considering this is important when planning programs. Additionally, social injustices like discrimination, oppression, and inequitable access to mental health services and messages can impact mental health profoundly.

SO, WHAT IS "EQUITY"?

When it comes to health, equity is the notion that **everyone** can live a healthy life and live to their full health potential. Equity means fair and just access and opportunities for all students.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "DIVERSITY"?

Diversity occurs within groups where different identities, perspectives, and experiences exist. Those differences are valuable and serve to make the team stronger and more able to plan your work in such a way that is relevant and accessible to your unique school community.

WE WON'T TURN ANYONE AWAY... IS THAT "INCLUSION"?

Not quite, but it is important that you are allowing all to join! Inclusion is one step further. Not just opening the door to all, but actively creating safe spaces and a sense of belonging, that recognize and value each individual's unique and intersecting* perspectives, ideas, and experiences.

**Intersectionality, in the context of identities, is a term coined by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how each individual's identities are made up of intersecting elements such as race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, and much more.*

Collaborating and engaging with the different individuals, organizations, resources, and professionals at your school is the best way to build robust, mutually beneficial partnerships proactively. As a leadership team, connect with a broad array of individuals and partners as early as possible to make sure you have many perspectives involved in your brainstorming, planning, promoting, and team goal setting.

An Inclusive Mindset in Chapter Activities

Creating a welcoming, inclusive, accessible environment during your meetings, on social media, and online spaces, and at each of your programs is one way to strive for increased equity. Consider some of the below questions and elements and how you might incorporate them into your chapter activities.

- Are people with various racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, religious, and cultural identities, disabilities, and ages included in planning events? Is all information presented at this event inclusive to diverse groups concerning race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, culture, age, and disability? Do the speakers/presenters represent people of different genders, sexual orientations, races, ages, ethnicity, and/or other

characteristics? If you have students sharing their stories, do you have a diverse group?

- Consider forming a team or task force to review potential speakers' lineup before confirmation to ensure that diverse perspectives and viewpoints are represented.
- Is there an anticipated need for interpreters or transliterators? (E.g. American Sign Language, a language other than English). If so, have arrangements been made?
- If you are doing group introductions, model sharing your pronouns and invite others to do so (if they would like).
- As a leader of an event or meeting, be prepared to challenge instances of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, discrimination, or other micro-aggressions.
- Have presenters been asked if they need accommodations for equal access? Have they been informed of ways to make presentations accessible to various audiences?
- Are there subtitle options available for presentations, movies, audio clips, etc.?
- Are microphones available or requested? Have presenters or facilitators been instructed to use the microphone (even if they don't think they need it) and repeat questions from the audience that are not spoken into microphones?
- Are all areas of the facility considered accessible for people with physical disabilities – including parking, pathways, and entrances to the building, restrooms, and the room itself? *Note: grassy or unpaved courtyards are not accessible.*
- Are all-gender bathrooms available and accessible? Do event materials include the location of all-gender bathrooms?

- Have you considered including a statement about your commitment to universal access and procedures for requesting disability-related accommodations? For example, “Our goal is to make all services and materials accessible. Please contact (insert name) at (insert email/ phone) by (insert date) to request accommodations that will make activities and resources accessible to you.”

This list isn't comprehensive but should provide you a good starting point to consider what additional considerations to make in order to foster an inclusive environment. If you don't know the answer to some of these questions, reach out to your school's Diversity Office and Disability Resource Office to learn about what resources are already available to you and what suggestions they may have.

Resources

- Find Chapter resources, success guides, opportunities, and more on the [Active Minds Chapter Hub](#).
- Connect with Active Minds National Staff! Get advice, ask questions, and brainstorm with our team. We're here for you. The Chapters team hosts weekly [office hours](#) where you can learn about chapter success tips, ask questions, work through any challenges you may be facing, and more!
- Sign up for Slack and chat with student leaders from across the country! Slack is a comprehensive platform that gives you the ability to ask questions, provide ideas, share successes, and overall build a more cohesive network of Active Minds, mental health advocates, and activists. [Sign up for Slack](#) and download the app onto your phone and/or computer.