WDN Meeting Notes, June 17, 2021

Anti-Racist Code of Practice

Coordinated Care Services, Inc. (CCSI), has organizationally put theory to practice by creating an Anti-Racist Code of Practice that has been included as a fundamental piece within their Code of Business Ethics. On June 17th, Terrell Smith, Talent and Culture Specialist from CCSI, shared the commitments it has made to hold itself accountable both internally and externally as an Anti-Racist organization. Terrell presented:

1. A brief history about CCSI.
2. A description of what is included within the Anti-Racist Code of Practice.
3. The development process and plan to launch.
4. Organizational goals and potential challenges.
5. Additional steps to maintain sustainability.

The PowerPoint presentation he made is attached to these notes.

After Terrell's presentation, we broke up into four breakout groups to address two sets of questions:

Set 1   How would a Code of Practice work in our organization?

How would we integrate this work into our organizational systems?

Set 2   How do we develop leadership understanding and support?

What are the operating outcomes of the Code we plan to achieve?

Following are the notes from one of the breakout groups:

Breakout Group

- Cheryl Hayward & Ebony Burgess from Monroe County
- Terrell Smith from CCSI
- Sady Fischer from Excellus
- Sara Molyneux from RTS

Set 1 Questions

1. How would a Code of Practice work in our organization?
2. How would we integrate this work into our organizational systems?

Cheryl Hayward & Ebony (Monroe County)

We comprise the Monroe County Office of Diversity Equity & Inclusion, which is a new department for the County.

Part of our approach is to identify the values the organization is looking to build upon, and then weave them into the systems, policies, and practices. We are developing a Diversity Action Plan. It is in progress. Our department is very new (February). We are newborns at the County, but we come with a background in DEI.

The Code of Practice would work in our organization by laying out a foundation of communicating across all Departments. Everyone would be in sync. There would be no gray areas. The expectations would be loud and clear. Getting leadership buy-in is crucial because leadership sets the tone. The approach at CCSI puts emphasis about being mindful about the delivery but clear about the results. We see that as critical at the County as well.

In terms of integrating this work into our organizational systems – we do need to be aware of intentions/pitfalls. It will be up to us and leadership to reassure the organization that a Code of Practice is about growth and the intention is to develop a culture that is inclusive of everyone. At the same time, we need to evaluate how the Code actually works and looks in each area. For example, how does it look in practice in the County's hiring and promotional practices?

Terrell Smith (CCSI)

Everyone does realize the need to be intentional. The Code of Practice is not just a piece of paper. In terms of the questions/pitfalls, I like to plan and prepare for the worst. It's not being fatalistic – it's just part of my personality to look at those possibilities. No matter how things play out, everything won't be perfect and it is important to be able to adapt and adjust accordingly.

It's important for everyone in an organization to realize the abundance of resources available to educate themselves (about inclusion, anti-racism, equity). I get discouraged with the pervasive attitude that "I need someone to tell me/give the info to me." It is vital to encourage a habit of self-education, self-directed learning instead of looking for someone else to give it to you.

Sady Fisher (Excellus) and Terrell Smith (CCSI)

We need to use the networks we have in Rochester because none of us have all the answers. There's a humility that we need to practice ourselves by asking how do we collectively harness the power to work together?

Sady Fischer (Excellus)

In response to Cheryl and Ebony: I'm excited for the formation of the team on the County level!

I'm the Director of DEI at Excellus/BCBS, serving Rochester/Syracuse/Buffalo/Utica.

At Excellus, we have an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access (IDEA) mindset embedded in our work. We apply an equity lens to areas like veteran status, LGBTQ+, disability and so on. What I like about the Code of Conduct is that it takes our existing work with IDEA and shows what it means to have those principles explicitly described/called out.

We have a list of questions that are similar to the Code of Practice. I am interested in taking a closer look at how to integrate those existing questions/aspects of IDEA into a Conduct perspective.

Every year, we encourage employees to participate in the YWCA Stand Against Racism. We participate in various quality indices (LGTB quality index, Disability quality index) to examine and increase our inclusive perspective. With the Code of Conduct, we would be literally writing it out all and showing what it looks like. It would define what competency in DEI looks like and demonstrate the value of DEI. Applying a Code of Practice is a great opportunity for us at Excellus to explore questions like "What does this look like in our values? What does it look like to be an Inclusive Leader?" It's also a great opportunity to examine privilege and inclusion. Someone may be aligned with racial equity while at the same time demonstrates homophobic bias. No one gets a "pass" – it sets the expectation that we all have work to do and we all need to educate ourselves.

Ebony (Monroe County)

An important approach is in allowing ourselves to be vulnerable, we have to have conversations and race is part of the conversation. We can always find something we can touch on that everyone can relate to (sex, age, disability, ethnicity). In our conversations, we can say, "Hey, we aren't the experts - educate me!" We need to be able to share with each other during encounters. A Code of Conduct needs to emphasize the importance of collaboration.

Cheryl Hayward (Monroe County)

It important that there is a continual message to educate. For example, "Here are resources to go to learn more." Members of an organization need get to a place where they are comfortable having uncomfortable conversations with each other, and be willing to identify the elephant in the room or the elephant that other people are dealing with.

Terrell Smith (CCSI)

I do wish it was more normal to have conversations with groups with vastly different perspectives (for example, segregationists and anti-racists) on something like the Code of Practice. It is vital to have people with opposing viewpoints to interact in order to fix the constant cycle of fear. I'm thinking about a famous blues musician (Daryl Davis) who deliberately attended KKK meetings because he wanted to understand what motivated them. Eventually, he was able to realize the roots of the fear of some of the members and even befriended the Grand Dragon of the KKK. There was a fear of the unknown. We have to get uncomfortable in order to understand each other. There's a great Ted Talk on this story.

- *Tedx Talk: Why I, as a black man, attend KKK rallies*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORp3q1Oaezw&t=68s
- *INTENTIONALITY OF WK KELLOG FOUNDATION'S JOURNEY*: https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resources/2020/08/one-journey--racial-equity--diversity---inclusion-at-the-w-k--kellogg-foundation

<u>Cheryl Hayward (Monroe County)</u>

Yes – that ties in with the importance of relationship building. I may not be able to change another person's mind, but I can change their response to me. Integrating expectations into the organizations (like the Anti-Racist Code of Practice) might allow people to move on to be able to have uncomfortable conversations. It becomes more about expressing that your intention is to learn about me rather than to make a decision (judgement) about me.

The Anti-Racist Code of Conduct is not a static document. We would look to constantly cycle so that skill sets and norms are evolving and growing.

<u>Sara Molyneux (RTS)</u>

We lifted and use the IDEA approach from Excellus as part of our current education campaign at RTS. An ongoing question within our Culture & Inclusion Council is how to emphasize inclusion. For an Anti-Racist Code of Conduct to work in our organization, we'd need to deliver the message in a way to counter a perception that we are excluding other aspects of diversity and discrimination (intersectionality).

CCSI's Anti-Racist Code of Practice will be available for download on its home page, https://www.ccsi.org/ after its organizational launch at the end of June.

Our next Zoom meeting will be on **Wednesday, August 18, 8:30 to 10:30AM**. Details to follow.