



Dear UCEDD Partners,

I am extremely pleased that this year's Technical Assistance Institute addresses the critical issue of making the promise of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (DD Act) a reality for all people with developmental disabilities and ensuring that no one is left out. This is a major priority for all of us at the Administration on Disabilities and the Administration for Community Living as a whole.

The DD Act speaks to the importance of cultural and linguistic competence stating that services and supports should be delivered "... in a manner that is responsive to the beliefs, interpersonal styles, attitudes, language, and behaviors of individuals who are receiving the services ..."

This charge requires a network of leaders and professionals of varied backgrounds equipped to address the needs of an increasingly diverse population and it requires cultural and linguistic competency to be integrated into every aspect of our work.

For example, UCEDDs need to actively bring more people from marginalized and historically underrepresented communities, including people with disabilities, into all aspects of their core functions in order to provide appropriate skills development and pre service training, services, research, information dissemination and knowledge translation, as well as role models and sufficient personnel to address the growing needs of an increasingly diverse country. I am grateful that the TA Institute Planning Committee has responded to this call by creating a meeting agenda, which focuses on engaging you, UCEDD leaders, in a facilitated dialogue based on the Diversity and Inclusion toolkit to identify strategies for advancing diversity, inclusion, and cultural and linguistic competence. The Toolkit was developed last year by AUCD with input from AUCD's Multicultural Council, and the national network of UCEDDs with guidance and funding by the AIDD.

In order to have a meaningful discussion during the TA Institute, I hope you will take the time to become more familiar with the Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit, its objectives, and its strategies as well as other diversity initiatives funded by AIDD and other sources.

I hope these initiatives - the Toolkit, Diversity Leadership Institute, and Diversity Fellowship program – and the upcoming Institute can serve as springboards for building consensus across the UCEDDs, AIDD and URC around a diversity blueprint that we can all act upon. I look forward to working with all of you to continue growing the cultural and linguistic competency of a network that provides such critical services to people with developmental disabilities.

Aaron Bishop
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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services