



Cultural Competency Plan 2023

Benchmark Human Services (Benchmark) is dedicated to serving and employing diverse populations across the United States. The organization was founded with the mission of helping those on the margins (people with intellectual and developmental disabilities) to be included in the fabric of the communities in which they live, work, and recreate. As the company has grown and diversified, so too have the demographics of those we serve and the employees we hire to carry out that work. This evolution has underscored the growing importance of ensuring cultural competence in all aspects of our business, encompassing access to services, service delivery, communication channels, as well as benefits, pay, and promotion equity for our staff. We recognize that we are a stronger organization, better able to carry out our mission when we understand, value, and affirm the worth of each individual we serve and employ.

Benchmark has developed this Cultural Competency Plan to ensure the cultural and linguistic needs of those we serve and our employees are met, and that each person we touch is met with dignity and respect. The Plan is not a static document; it is a living commitment to ongoing improvement. To ensure transparency and access, the Cultural Competency Plan is available to all employees and individuals served on our website (<https://benchmarkhs.com/about/diversity-inclusion/>).

Service Delivery and Support

One of Benchmark's Corporate Principles states: Services should be designed with the client (customer) choice in mind. Programs should be wrapped around people rather than forcing people into fixed programs.

Our approach to service delivery is "one person at a time." We take time to get to know each individual served, what their wants and needs are, what is important to and for the individual, and how their unique cultural lens informs their care. This customized approach begins at intake and continues throughout the spectrum of care.

Each person we serve has a plan of care, often referred to as an Individual Support Plan or ISP. The Plan is reviewed each year by a team of people chosen by the individual that, in addition to the individual, often includes, staff, a case manager, family or guardians, etc. The ISP includes demographic or cultural considerations, linguistic needs, accessibility factors and more.

Inclusion and Accessibility:

Part of Benchmark's mission is ensuring those we serve are involved in their communities to the level of their choosing. Our teams focus on integrating individuals into communities through education and vocational opportunities and recreation.

If individuals in Benchmark’s care are in need of adaptive equipment, mobility supports, etc., we work with outside vendors and payors to ensure their needs are met.

Language/Communications:

Benchmark contracts with several language translation/interpreting services available to those we serve whose primary language is not English. Contracting partners include written and verbal translation, in-person, telephone, or virtual support for over 250 languages, including American Sign Language (ASL). The contracted companies and contact information follow:

Company	Services	Scheduling
Sorenson Communications	Interpreting and captioning for the deaf and hard of hearing in English and Spanish	SCIS.com/request short-notice or urgent needs call 1-800-659-4783
Interpreters and Translators, Inc.	250 plus languages, in-person, over the phone, and video interpreting	1-800-648-0686
AMN Healthcare Language Services	200 plus languages in-person, over the phone, and video interpreting	844-554-3457

Individual Rights and Grievances:

At Benchmark, we prioritize individual rights and grievances, upholding a commitment to training all our staff upon hiring and annually on the importance of these principles. If the right of an individual served is violated or the individual has any other complaints or grievances they can report at any time through the form of communication most comfortable for them including written, in-person verbal, or by calling Benchmark’s Compliance Hotline at 1-877-319-9669, option 6.

Soliciting Feedback:

Benchmark solicits feedback annually through a satisfaction survey distributed to individuals served, parents/guardians, vendors, funders, and other partners. The surveys are available in hard copy or electronic format. Results of the satisfaction surveys are included in our annual Outcome Measurements Report, along with any action steps to improve satisfaction. Feedback is also solicited at annual ISP meetings for individuals served and for many, through quarterly meetings with the individual’s support team. Of course, Benchmark employs an “open door policy” and feedback is welcome any time.

Community Networking and Relationships:

Benchmark provides services in 18 states and dozens of individual communities throughout the country. In each of these communities, Benchmark’s leaders and frontline staff develop relationships and identify resources that may be beneficial to individuals served. From housing to food resources to medical and behavioral healthcare providers and more, our teams work to ensure those we serve have the resources they need.

In some markets served by Benchmark, cultural considerations and education are critical, such as Tribal engagement in the Indigenous communities we serve. Additionally, in several markets where Benchmark provides services, our teams host community collaboratives and other

trainings, working with law enforcement, hospital and emergency room staff, first responders and other community members to educate them on working with individuals with IDD and behavioral health needs and how to ensure these individuals safely thrive and integrate into the communities in which they live.

Hiring, Staff Development, and Creating a Culture of Belonging

As part of Benchmark’s aim to deliver culturally competent services, emphasis has been placed on both ensuring the company is recruiting and hiring from a diverse talent pool and providing training, resources, and other tools to employees to learn more about and help promote a corporate culture that is diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible.

Recruiting Diverse Talent:

Since 2020, Benchmark has expanded its resources for staff recruitment in an effort to target diverse talent. In addition to the traditional recruiting platforms used by the Company, such as Indeed.com, Career Builder, Zip Recruiter, and conventional ads, Benchmark now uses the following recruitment tools/resources/platforms:

- Job postings on Circa, a recruitment resource dedicated to helping companies build more diverse, innovative, and high-performing teams.
- -Direct contact with local unemployment offices, community centers, and social service organizations, often facilitated through Circa.
- Job postings in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
- Job postings in Latina and Hispanic Colleges and Universities.
- Collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies.
- Engagement with professional organizations that represent underrepresented populations.

Benchmark tracks employee demographics, including minority status. Company-wide diversity outcomes for FY 2023 follow:

New Hires June – July								
Position	FY 2022 Minority	FY 2023 Minority	FY 2022 Non-Minority	FY 2023 Non-Minority	FY 2022 Female	FY 2022 Female	FY 2022 Male	FY 2022 Male
Executive	3	1	9	1	7	0	5	2
First / Mid Management	33	25	26	26	54	39	7	12
Professionals	50	57	85	132	124	179	16	10
Technicians	8	11	7	15	17	26	2	1
Sales	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
Admin. Support	7	7	19	24	22	26	4	5

Craft	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Operatives	8	28	6	7	8	19	9	16
Labor and Helper	0	1	3	1	2	2	1	0
Service	579	741	286	429	878	891	246	314
Total	688	871	442	636	1113	1183	290	360

FY 2022 Unidentified Race	FY 2023 Unidentified Race
First/Mid Management = 2	Technicians = 1
Professionals = 5	Service = 35
Operatives = 3	
Service = 263	

Promotions								
Job Group	FY 2022 Minority	FY 2023 Minority	FY 2022 Non-Minority	FY 2023 Non-Minority	FY 2022 Female	FY 2022 Female	FY 2022 Male	FY 2022 Male
Executive	2	0	5	4	5	2	2	2
First / Mid Management	11	15	13	22	20	30	4	7
Professionals	6	6	8	24	14	26	0	4
Technicians	1	3	0	0	1	2	0	1
Sales	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative Staff	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Craft	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Operatives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Labor and Helper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Service	15	16	20	26	29	32	6	10
Total	36	40	46	76	70	92	12	24

Total Active Workforce on June 30								
Job Group	FY 2022 Minority	FY 2023 Minority	FY 2022 Non-Minority	FY 2023 Non-Minority	FY 2022 Female	FY 2022 Female	FY 2022 Male	FY 2022 Male
Executive	16	14	74	71	63	57	27	28
First / Mid Management	118	112	101	97	174	163	45	46
Professionals	140	162	394	455	471	553	63	64
Technicians	21	21	30	37	46	51	5	6
Sales	0	0	3	4	3	4	0	0
Administrative Staff	19	22	65	72	69	77	16	18
Craft	2	2	2	1	0	0	4	3
Operatives	26	34	58	58	34	37	52	55
Labor and Helper	4	4	24	20	11	10	17	14
Service	1192	1321	563	671	1325	1433	471	562
Total	1538	1692	1314	1486	2196	2385	700	796

FY 2022 Unidentified Race	FY 2023 Unidentified Race
Operatives = 2	Service = 3

Anti-harassment and Discrimination:

Benchmark is committed to the principles of non-discrimination, harassment prevention, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Benchmark is an Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, national origin, citizenship status, disability, or veteran status.

Benchmark does not tolerate any form of harassment or discrimination of its employees or the individuals served. Policies are in place to address workplace harassment and discrimination. Employees who wish to report harassment or discriminatory conduct or retaliation may report to their supervisor. If an employee is uncomfortable reporting to their supervisor or department director, they may report to the Vice President of Human Resources or Corporate Counsel.

Any employee who is determined to have committed discrimination, harassment, or retaliation will be subject to disciplinary measures up to and including termination of employment.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee and Work:

In 2020, in the wake of several events, including the murder of George Floyd and a global pandemic that further disenfranchised poor, disabled, and Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) communities, Benchmark leadership recognized it was time to formally examine our Company's efforts to ensure diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at all levels of the organization. A DEIA Committee was formed to work toward that end.

The Committee has and continues its work identifying what Benchmark does well and where we can improve. A recent engagement with an outside consultation firm, Simply HR, included a thorough assessment of our DEIA culture and practices, and the results of that assessment have translated into strategic goals that align with the mission and vision of our DEIA work. A list of initiatives/action items led by the DEIA Committee and internal behavioral health leaders follows:

No.	Initiative/Action Items	Description
1	Monthly Breakthrough Series – Virtual and led by an external expert/trainer	Webinars are designed to raise awareness, promote understanding, and develop skills related to diversity, equity, and inclusion within the organization. These trainings aim to create a more inclusive environment, reduce bias and discrimination, and foster collaboration among employees from diverse backgrounds. Different topics are discussed each month.
2	Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)	Employee Resource Groups are voluntary, employee-led groups that bring together individuals who share common characteristics, backgrounds, or experiences. ERGs provide a platform for employees to connect, support each other, and advocate for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) within the workplace. ERGs will launch in November 2023 and the first two groups will focus on 1) disabilities and 2) LGBTQIA+
3	Updated Policies	The compensation, promotion, general training, and professional development policies were recently updated to include a focus on diversity and equity.
4	Management Training	Management attends various trainings, including Management 202, management rallies, training day, and HUB courses. The organization has included DEIA content in most trainings as is appropriate.
5	Staff Training	Staff have access to training on the HUB and are required to complete harassment and

		discrimination training annually. Additionally, all front-line staff complete a monthly training focused on the health, safety, and respect of individuals served. DEIA-related content is in the rotation of monthly training topics.
6	Trauma-Informed Training	Internal, licensed clinicians conduct regular training on providing care through a trauma-informed lens.
7	DEIA column in Thrive, employee newsletter	Each issue of Thrive, Benchmark's employee newsletter, issued quarterly, includes a feature related to the DEIA Committee's work, including a video series featuring member of the DEIA Committee.
8	Inclusive Language Guide	Benchmark has developed an Inclusive Language Guide to help educate and guide Benchmark staff on ways to use language that shows respect and is free of stereotypes, prejudice, discriminatory views, or bias.

Goals and Objectives

While providing culturally competent services has been a hallmark of Benchmark, and significant focus has been placed on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives, we realize we have some areas of deficit or room for improvement. Throughout fiscal years 2024 and 2025, we will focus on the following goals and objectives:

1. Conduct individual market assessments to determine what marketing and informational materials are used and if there is a need to translate those materials into any languages beyond English. Produce materials based on assessment results.
2. Determine which demographic data Benchmark should collect from individuals in services and find a systematic way to collect and store that information at intake for individuals who are new to services and from those who have been in our care prior to establishing a tracking system.
3. Complete an analysis of current vendors tracking how many vendors are minority-owned and women (MWBE) businesses. Work with the DEIA Committee to set a goal to partner with a specific percentage of vendors who are certified MWBEs.
4. When expanding services into new cities, states, etc., do a thorough market assessment of the community, its residents, its demographic makeup, its culture and any cultural considerations related to the populations we will serve in that market.

Updates and Review Cycle of the Cultural Competency Plan

This Plan will be reviewed, evaluated for effectiveness, and updated to improve service provision, at least annually, by members of Benchmark's senior leadership team, including the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Culture Officer, Vice President of Human Resources, Chief Compliance Officer, Chief Nursing Officer, and Corporate Counsel. Other changes and updates to the Plan may be made at any time as needed. Employees are directed to recommend changes or updates by submitting them to Courtney Heiser, Chief Culture Officer, at cheiser@benchmarkhs.com.