



Cultural Competency Plan 2024

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 when someone begins services 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.

DEIA Work and Inclusive Language

As part of Benchmark's aim to deliver culturally competent services, emphasis has been placed on ensuring the company recruits and hires 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. We believe a diverse workforce will provide better quality services to the diverse population of people receiving services.

To create shared language among employees, Benchmark's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee (DEIA) developed an inclusive language guide to help educate and guide Benchmark staff on how to use language that shows respect and is free of stereotypes, prejudice, discriminatory views, or bias.

To learn more about the work led by the DEIA Committee, you may request a copy of our Diversity Plan by emailing diversitycommittee@benchmarkhs.com.

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. The following are goals and objectives established in 2023 to work toward throughout 2024 and 2025. While none of the goals have been completed yet, significant work has begun on several of them.

1. **Goal:** 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.

Progress: A formal assessment has yet to be created, however, Benchmark contracted with several translation and interpreter firms to provide services upon request for Benchmark programs throughout the country. These resources were shared through this Plan, which was distributed to management and which lives on the Benchmark website.

2. **Goal:** 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.

Progress: The demographic data has been determined. The intake form and process was revamped to capture this information with individuals when they are beginning services. Benchmark is working to get existing individuals' served demographic information into the tracking system. This has been an extensive undertaking, but it is anticipated this will be completed by June 30, 2025.

3. **Goal:** 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.

Progress: A review of Benchmark's vendor contract system showed no current method of tracking and identifying MWBE status. A sub-committee will be formed to work on this goal and to determine the best way to gather that information among future vendors and to mine information from current vendors on MWBE status.

4. **Goal:** 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.

Progress: An initial list of assessment questions has been developed and approved by the CEO, who will assign this work to the Development Team and Vice President overseeing new program areas.

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.