Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER BY THE DEI OFFICE

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Brookville Center for Children Services &
Citizens Options Unlimited

Making Connections Through DEI Discourse

Championing Belonging: Strategies for Effective Inclusion Advocacy

Belonging is the profound sense of being seen, valued, and connected to others in a community or society. It's the feeling of being at home, where one can be their authentic self without fear of judgment or rejection. Belonging is not just about physical presence, but about emotional connection and validation. When we belong, we feel recognized and respected for who we are, without being reduced to stereotypes or oversimplified labels. We build meaningful relationships with others, sharing experiences and values that create a sense of unity and purpose. Our identities are celebrated, and our differences are acknowledged and appreciated.

However, belonging can be elusive for many. Social exclusion, stereotyping, and lack of representation can make people feel like outsiders, struggling to find their place. Systemic barriers can prevent full participation, leaving people feeling marginalized and invisible. To foster belonging, we need to create spaces where people feel heard and valued. This requires active listening, empathy, and understanding. Inclusive practices and policies can help break down barriers and promote social cohesion. Representation and visibility are also crucial, as they allow different people to see themselves reflected in the world around them. When we prioritize belonging, we can build more compassionate and inclusive communities. We can create environments where everyone feels valued, respected, and connected. By doing so, we can unlock the full potential of people and communities, promoting a sense of purpose and well-being that benefits everyone.

Championing belonging in daily life within the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) workspace requires a multifaceted approach that prioritizes the unique needs and experiences of people with IDD. It involves creating a culture of inclusivity, empathy, and understanding, where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute. In the IDD workspace, championing belonging might involve providing individualized support and accommodations that cater to the diverse needs of employees, clients, or participants. This could include offering flexible work arrangements, adaptive equipment, or personalized communication strategies. By acknowledging and addressing the unique challenges and strengths of people with IDD, organizations can foster a sense of belonging and promote equal opportunities for growth and development.

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Moreover, championing belonging in the IDD workspace requires a commitment to person-centered practices that prioritize the autonomy, dignity, and self-advocacy of people with IDD. This might involve providing training and resources that empower people to make informed choices, take calculated risks, and develop self-advocacy skills. By centering the voices and experiences of people with IDD, organizations can create a culture of empowerment and inclusivity.

Advocating for inclusion requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the complex needs and experiences of diverse people and communities. Effective strategies for inclusion advocacy involve creating spaces where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute. This can involve creating opportunities for public speaking, writing, and other forms of expression, as well as actively listening to and centering the voices of those who are often overlooked.

Another crucial approach is to advocate for policy changes, providing training and education on inclusive practices, and supporting initiatives that promote equal access to resources and opportunities. Building alliances and partnerships with diverse stakeholders is also essential for effective inclusion advocacy. By working together with community organizations, advocacy groups, and other allies, people can leverage their collective power to drive meaningful change and create a more just and equitable society.

Additionally, inclusion advocacy requires a commitment to ongoing learning and self-reflection. This involves recognizing and challenging one's own biases and assumptions, seeking out diverse perspectives and experiences, and being open to feedback and growth. Ultimately, effective inclusion advocacy involves creating a culture of empathy, respect, and understanding, where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute. By working together to address the complex needs and experiences of diverse people and communities, we can build environments where equity and accessibility are not just ideals, but daily practices that shape policies, relationships, and outcomes.

By working together to champion belonging, organizations can create a culture of inclusivity, empathy, and understanding that benefits everyone involved.

Resources

- Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
- The Power of Disability: 10 Lessons for Surviving, Thriving, and Changing the World by Al Etmanski
- The Disability Justice Reader edited by Talila A. Lewis, Sins Invalid, and Patty Berne
- National Organization on Disability (NOD): Advocates for full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life.
- Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF): Legal and policy advocacy for disability civil rights.
- Disability Justice: Offers a foundational overview of the disability justice framework and related resources.
- The Inclusion Solution: Practical strategies and thought leadership on diversity, inclusion, and equity.
- "Disability Justice: A Framework for Social Change" by Patty Berne
- "The Importance of Belonging: A Literature Review" by the Othering & Belonging Institute
- "Inclusive Leadership: A Framework for Promoting Diversity and Inclusion" by the Center for Creative Leadership

Did You Know?

People with IDD who identify as LGBTQ+ often face unique challenges and barriers in accessing healthcare, education, and social services?

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who identify as LGBTQ+ are people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. They may experience intersectional challenges navigating societal stigma, healthcare disparities, and limited support systems. Some may face barriers to expressing their identities authentically due to misconceptions about their capabilities or assumptions about asexuality. Despite these obstacles, many LGBTQ+ people with IDD advocate for themselves, seek community connections, and demand inclusive spaces that respect their autonomy and identities. Their experiences highlight the importance of promoting accessibility, understanding, and acceptance within both disability and LGBTQ+ communities. Recognizing these intersectional experiences is crucial for providing inclusive and effective services.

Key Challenges:
1. Double Stigma & Discrimination
- People may face ableism in LGBTQ+ spaces and homophobia or transphobia in disability services.
- This intersectionality can lead to increased isolation and exclusion from both communities.
2. Healthcare Access Challenges
- Many healthcare providers lack training on the needs of LGBTQ+ people with disabilities.
- Misunderstandings or biases can lead to inappropriate care or denial of services.
3. Barriers in Education & Social Services
- LGBTQ+ youth with IDD are at higher risk of bullying, discrimination, and being placed in non-inclusive programs.
- Educational and social services often fail to address both sexual/gender identity and disability support in tandem.
4. Lack of Representation and Visibility
- LGBTQ+ people with IDD are often invisible in advocacy efforts, media, and policy discussions.
- Their voices are rarely included in decision-making, limiting the effectiveness of programs meant to support them.
5. Increased Vulnerability
- This population is more susceptible to marginalization, exclusion, and exploitation.
6. Lack of Inclusive Support
- Inadequate training and resources for service providers can exacerbate these challenges.

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Did You Know?

People with IDD who identify as LGBTQ+ often face unique challenges and barriers in accessing healthcare, education, and social services?

Continued...

Providing inclusive and effective services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who identify as LGBTQ+ requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges the intersectionality of their identities. This involves

- Staff Training: Provide disability and LGBTQ+ cultural competency training to ensure staff understand and can meet individual needs.
- Accessible Facilities and Materials: Ensure physical spaces and educational materials are accessible and welcoming.
- Autonomy and Self-Advocacy: Prioritize individual autonomy, dignity, and self-advocacy, supporting informed decision-making.
- Adapted Communication: Use communication strategies tailored to individual needs, such as simple language or visual aids.
- Inclusive Care Planning: Involve support networks in care planning and provide sensitive, informed care.
- Addressing Systemic Barriers: Identify and address systemic barriers to access, promoting inclusive practices within organizations.
- Empowerment and Support: Foster empowerment and provide support tailored to individual needs, promoting well-being and self-expression.

Call to Action:
- As dedicated employees in the intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) workspace, we have a unique opportunity to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for people with IDD who identify as LGBTQ+. Let's work together to:
- Educate Ourselves: Seek out training and resources to better understand the experiences and needs of LGBTQ+ people with IDD.
- Create Welcoming Spaces: Ensure our facilities, materials, and practices are inclusive and respectful of all identities.

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Did You Know?

The National Black Disability Coalition advocates for the rights and inclusion of Black people with disabilities, including women and girls with IDD?

Continued...

Call to Action
- Amplify Voices: Listen to and amplify the voices of LGBTQ+ people with IDD, supporting their autonomy and self-advocacy.
- Challenge Assumptions: Recognize and challenge our own biases and assumptions, striving to provide person-centered support.
- Foster Community: Connect people with IDD to LGBTQ+ community resources and support networks.

Promoting self-advocacy and representation is essential to creating truly inclusive environments for all!

Resources:
- The Arc – LGBTQ+ People with Intellectual Disability - https://www.thearc.org/lgbtq-people-with-intellectual-disability
- The Trevor Project – LGBTQ Youth with Disabilities - https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/supporting-lgbtq-young-people-with-disabilities/
- GLAAD – Disability and LGBTQ+ Inclusion - https://glaad.org/disabilities/
- Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) – LGBTQ+ Resources - https://autisticadvocacy.org/resources/lgbtq-resources/
- LGBTQ+ Support Groups for People with IDD - https://www.thearc.org/
- "LGBTQ+ People with Intellectual Disability" by The Arc - https://www.thearc.org/lgbtq-people-with-intellectual-disability
- "Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth with Disabilities" by The Trevor Project - https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/supporting-lgbtq-young-people-with-disabilities/
- "Intersectionality and Disability" by Disability Studies Quarterly - https://dsq-sds.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/4449
- Sexuality and Disability: A Journal Exploring Sexuality and Disability Issues - https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/usdi20/current

Words & Concepts of the Quarter

Disability Justice: Where Accessibility Meets Equity

Disability Justice:
Disability justice is a framework that recognizes the intersectional experiences of people with disabilities and seeks to address the systemic barriers and injustices they face. It emphasizes:

1. Intersectionality: Considering how disability intersects with other identities (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, class).
2. Inclusion and Accessibility: Ensuring physical, programmatic, and attitudinal access for all.
3. Equity and Rights: Promoting equal opportunities, rights, and self-determination for people with disabilities.
4. Centering Marginalized Voices: Amplifying the perspectives and experiences of people with disabilities, particularly those from marginalized communities.
5. Self-Advocacy: Amplifying voices and leadership of people with IDD.
6. Community: Fostering inclusive, supportive environments.

Disability justice aims to create a more inclusive and equitable society by addressing the social, economic, and cultural barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating.
Accessibility:

- Refers to the design and implementation of products, services, and environments that can be used by people with disabilities.
- Involves removing barriers that prevent people with disabilities from participating fully.
- Examples include:
  - Physical accessibility (ramps, elevators, wheelchair-accessible seating)
  - Digital accessibility (screen reader compatibility, closed captions, keyboard-navigable interfaces)
  - Communication accessibility (sign language interpretation, braille signage, plain language)

Equity:

- Recognizes that all people do not start from the same place and focuses on adjusting imbalances, giving each person what they need to succeed. Imbalances focus on access, opportunity, and support. This extends to equality which ensures the fair distribution of resources, opportunities, and benefits to ensure that everyone has chance to thrive.
- Involves addressing systemic inequalities and biases that prevent certain groups from accessing opportunities.

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Examples include:

- Addressing disparities in education, employment, healthcare, and other areas
- Providing targeted support and accommodations to marginalized groups
- Creating inclusive policies and practices that account for diverse needs and experiences

The Connection:

- Accessibility is a crucial aspect of equity, as it ensures that people with disabilities can participate fully and access opportunities.
- Equity, in turn, recognizes that accessibility is not a one-size-fits-all solution and that different groups may require different types of support.
- By combining accessibility and equity, we can create environments that are not only accessible but also inclusive and just.

Call to Action:

Now is the time to move beyond compliance and commit to true equity and inclusion.

By embracing Disability Justice, we can transform IDD workspaces into environments that honor autonomy, celebrate diversity, and actively dismantle systemic barriers.

We call on all stakeholders—leaders, practitioners, advocates, and allies—to:

1. Center the Voices of People with Disabilities, especially those from marginalized communities.
2. Prioritize Accessibility in All Forms—physical, digital, programmatic, and communicative.
3. Advance Equity by addressing the unique needs of each person and actively correcting imbalances.
4. Foster Inclusive Communities where everyone can thrive, contribute, and lead.
5. Champion Self-Advocacy and person-centered approaches in policies, practices, and everyday interactions.

Let's co-create spaces where accessibility meets equity—where all people with IDD are seen, heard, supported, and empowered.

Take action today. Commit to disability justice—not as an afterthought, but as a foundation.

Resources:
- Disability Visibility Project – Edited by Alice Wong
- Website | Book
- "10 Principles of Disability Justice" – Sins Invalid - https://sinsinvalid.org/10-principles-of-disability-justice/
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) – W3C WCAG Overview
- ADA National Network – Accessibility Resources Visit site
- CAST – Universal Design for Learning (UDL) - https://www.cast.org/what-we-do/universal-design-for-learning/
- The Equity Framework – Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide (Annie E. Casey Foundation) - https://www.aecf.org/resources/race-equity-and-inclusion-action-guide
- The Arc - Visit The Arc
- Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) - Visit SABE
- National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) - Visit NACDD

This Quarter...

April

Diversity Month

Diversity Month is dedicated to celebrating and recognizing the diversity within our communities and fostering a deeper understanding of the differences and similarities among us.

Learn more

Arab American Heritage Month

Arab American Heritage Month is a time to celebrate the diverse culture, history, and contributions of Arab Americans to the United States. The month was officially recognized by the United States Department of State in 2021.

Learn more

Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month

Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month: It's a time to recognize and celebrate the diversity within the autism community, promote inclusion, and advocate for the rights and well-being of autistic people. The month also highlights gaps in autism acceptance within society.

Learn more

April

Earth month

Earth month is an annual celebration in April that focuses on raising awareness about environmental issues and encouraging actions to protect the planet.

Learn more

American Heart Month

National Child abuse Prevention Month: During April, we recognize National Child Abuse Prevention Month (NCAPM) and the importance of communities working together to support and strengthen families and prevent child maltreatment.

Learn more

National Volunteer Month

National Volunteer Month is a time to celebrate and recognize the contributions of volunteers. It is an opportunity to join the impact of volunteerism and encourage more people to get involved in their communities.

Learn more

April

Tartan (Scottish American) Heritage Month

Tartan (Scottish American) Heritage Month: is a period of celebration in the United States that recognizes the contributions and cultural impact of people of Scottish descent.

Learn more

Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Month

Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Month calls attention to the fact that sexual violence is widespread and impacts every person in the community. It is an opportunity to listen to and honor survivors in our community and show those impacted by sexual violence that they are not alone.

Learn more

Deaf History Month

National Deaf History Month is observed in April to celebrate the history, culture, and contributions of the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community in the United States.

Learn more

Sikh Heritage Month

Sikh Heritage Month: is an annual celebration in April that recognizes and honors the contributions and cultural richness of the Sikh community, particularly in North America.

Learn more

May

Jewish Heritage Month

Jewish heritage month is a time to recognize and celebrate the contributions of Jewish Americans to American society, culture, and history.

Learn more

Mental Health Awareness

Mental Health Awareness is an annual observance founded by Mental Health America in 1949 to highlight the importance of mental wellbeing, educate the public, reduce stigma and promote support for those affected by mental health conditions.

Learn more

Older Americans Month

Older Americans Month: observed annually in May, is a time to celebrate the contributions of older Americans and reaffirm commitments to serving them.

Learn more

May

Asian American and Pacific Island Heritage Month

Asian American and Pacific Island Heritage Month is a yearly celebration in the United States that recognizes the contributions and achievements of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.
Learn more

ALS Awareness Month

ALS Awareness Month: Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, is recognized during May as ALS Awareness Month. This month aims to raise awareness about the disease, support research, and provide support to people and families affected by ALS.

Learn more

Haitian Heritage Month

Haitian Heritage Month: is a time dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the rich culture, history, and contributions of Haitians and Haitian Americans.

Learn more

May

Indian Heritage Month

Indian Heritage Month is a month-long celebration is a time to honor and appreciate the rich traditions, customs, and contributions of the Indian community. It also marks the beginning of spring in many parts of India, making it a joyful and festive time for all.

Learn more

South Asian American Heritage Month

South Asian American Heritage Month is celebrated as part of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month. While not a separate month-long observance, South Asian contributions are recognized and celebrated within the broader AAPI Heritage Month festivities. The month of May was chosen to commemorate the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants in 1843 and the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, which involved significant contributions from Chinese immigrants.

Learn more

June

Pride Month (LGBTQIA+)

Pride Month (LGBTQIA+): is an annual commemoration of the LGBTQIA+ community, honoring their history, culture, and achievements. It's a time to celebrate diversity, raise awareness about LGBTQIA+ issues, and push for equality and acceptance.

Learn more

Caribbean American Heritage Month

Caribbean American Heritage Month: is a time to celebrate and recognize the contributions of Caribbean Americans to the United States, honoring their history, culture, and achievements.

Learn more

Black Music Month

Learn more

June

Portuguese American Heritage Month

Portuguese American Heritage Month: This month-long observance recognizes the contributions of Portuguese-Americans to the United States. Several events and celebrations are planned throughout the month to honor Portuguese culture, history, and traditions.

Learn more

Black Lives Matter Month
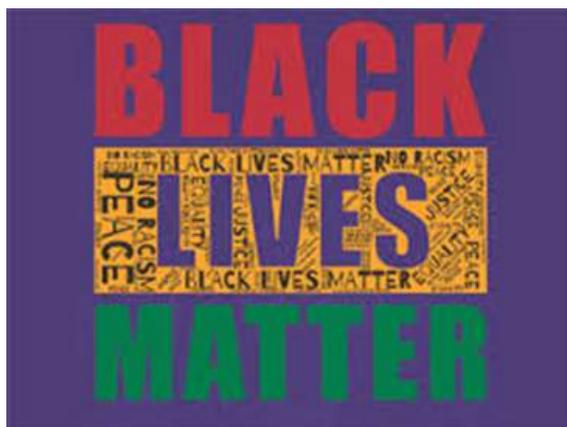
Black Lives Matter Month: a time to amplify the voices and struggles of Black people, and stand against racism and racially motivated violence.

Learn more

Immigrant Heritage Month

Black Lives Matter Month: a time to amplify the voices and struggles of Black people, and stand against racism and racially motivated violence.

Learn more

Days of the Quarter

April 2 World Autism Awareness Day

Learn more

April 7 Navrati ends (Hindu)

Learn More

April 10 Mahavir Jayanti (Jain)
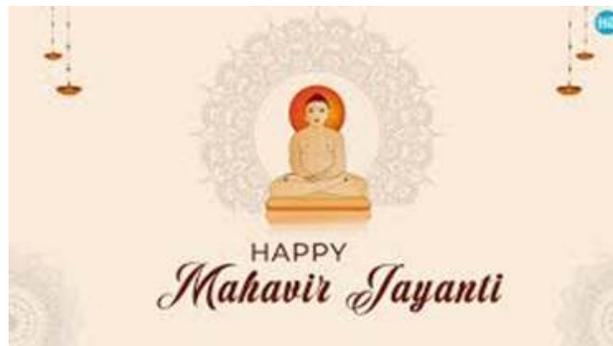
Learn more

April 11 National Day of Silence (LGBTQIA+)
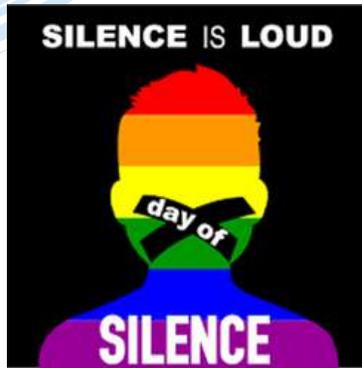
[Learn more](#)

April 11 to 17 Black Maternal Health Week
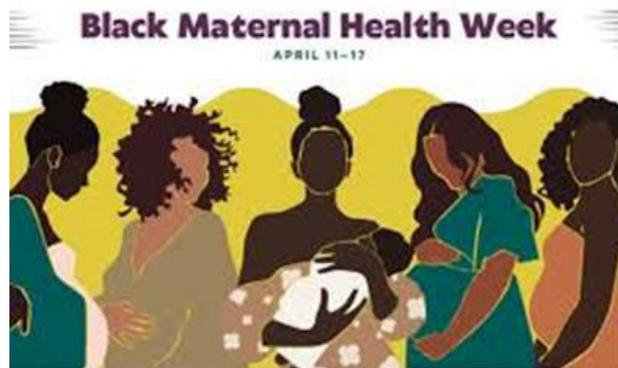
[Learn more](#)

April 12 Jehovah's Witnesses: The Memorial of Jesus' Death
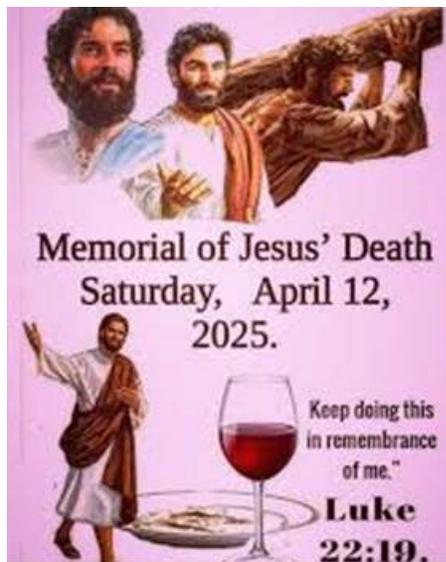
[Learn more](#)

April 12 to 20 Passover (Jewish)
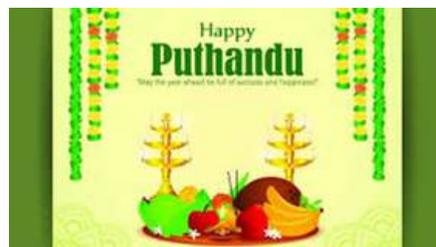
Learn more

April 13 Palm Sunday (Christian)

Learn more

April 13 Theravada New Year

Learn more

April 14: Aluth Avuruda & Puthandu

Learn more

April 14 Vaisakhi (Sikh)

Learn more

April 18 Good Friday (Christian)

Learn more

April 20 Easter (Christian)

Learn more

April 20 Ridvan

Learn more

April 21 Start of Ridvan (Baha'i)

Learn more

April 23 Yom Hashoah (Jewish)
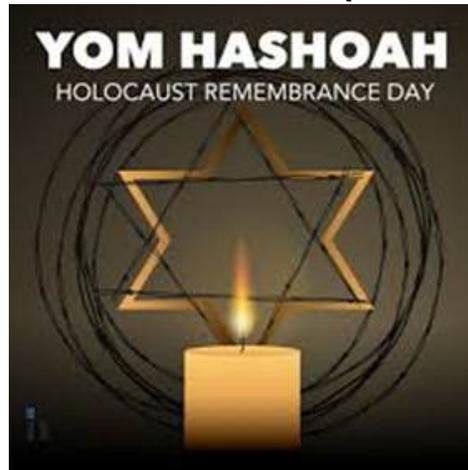
Learn more

April 26 Lesbian Visibility Day

Learn more

May.

May 1 ALS Awareness Month

Learn more

May 1 Beltane - (Northern Hemisphere) Wicca/Paganism

Learn more

May 1 Samhain - (Southern Hemisphere) Wicca/Paganism
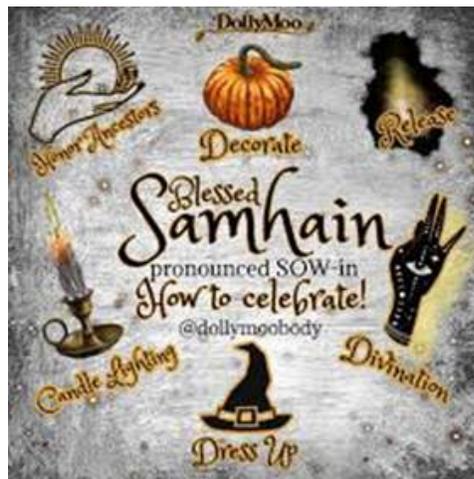
Learn more

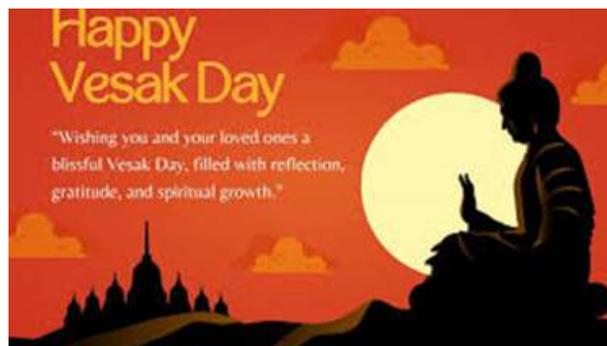# May 5 National Day for Awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Learn more

May 5 Cinco de Mayo (Battle of Puebla)

Learn more

May 12 Vesak (Buddha Day)

Learn more

May 15 Global Accessibility Awareness Day

Learn more

May 17 LGBTQ+ International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia
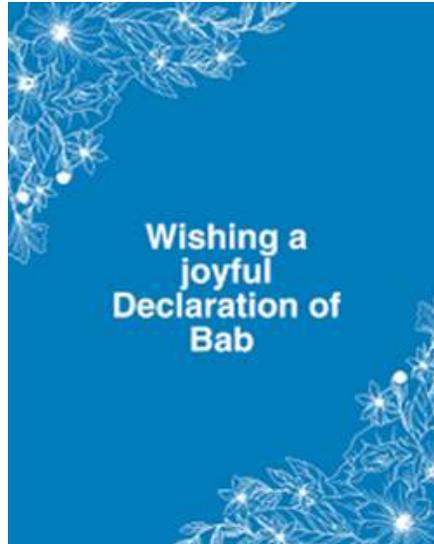

Learn more

May 17 Veterans: Armed Forces Day

Learn more

May 21 World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue & Development
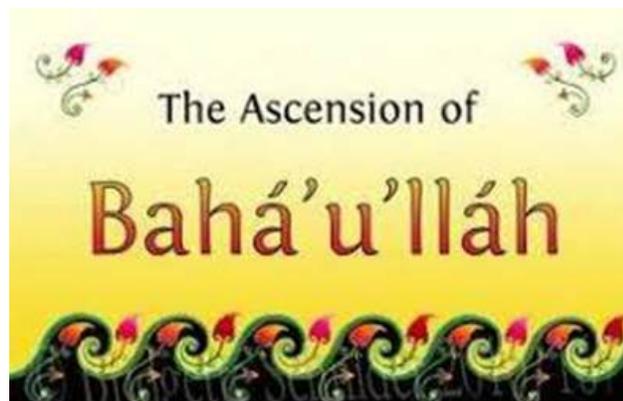

Learn more

May 23 Declaration of the Bab (Baha'i)

Wishing a joyful Declaration of Bab

Learn more

May 26 Memorial Day

MEMORIAL DAY
REMEMBER AND HONOR
2025

Learn more

May 29: Baha'i: Ascension of Baha'u'llah

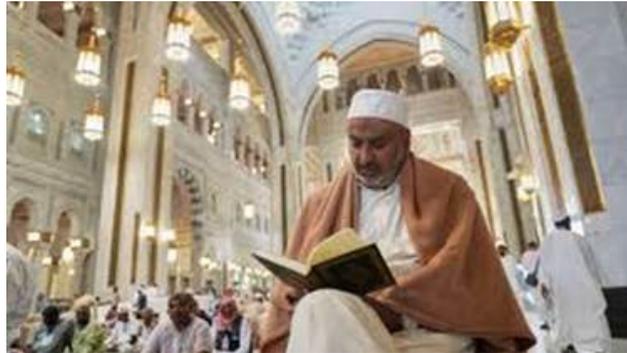The Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh

Learn more

<u>June</u>
June 1 to 3 Shavuot (Jewish)

[Learn more](#)

June 4 to 9 Hajj (Muslim)

[Learn more](#)

June 5 HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day

[Learn more](#)

June 7 to 10: Eid al-Adha (Muslim)

[Learn more](#)

June 8 Race Unity Day

[Learn more](#)

June 8 Pentecost (Orthodox Christian

[Learn more](#)

June 12 Loving Day

[Learn more](#)

June 18 International Day of Countering Hate Speech
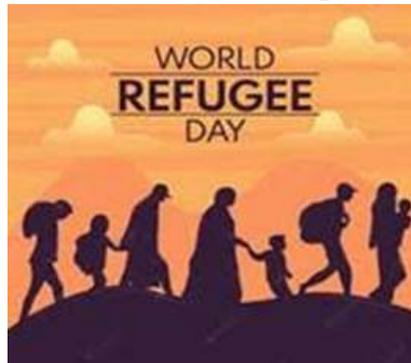

Learn more

June 19 Juneteenth

Learn more

June 20 World Refugee Day
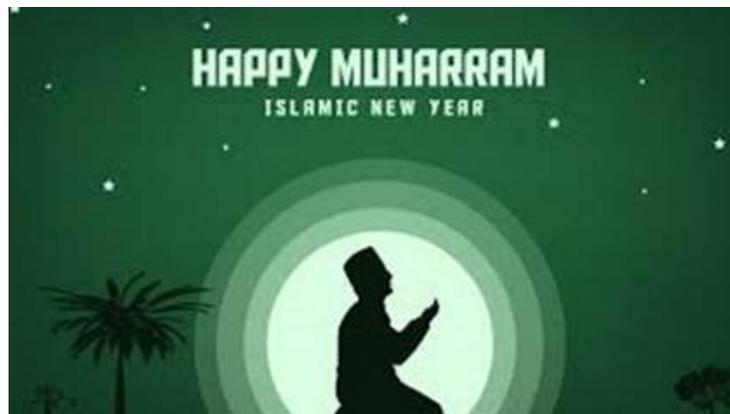

Learn more

June 20 Litha, Summer Solstice (Pagan)

Learn more

June 26 to 27 Hijri New Year (Islam)

Learn more

June 26 to July 25 Muharram

Learn more

June 28 Pride Day

Learn more

<u>Employee Inclusive Series</u>

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Resource Hub is now live!

Hello all,

We're excited to announce that the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Resource Hub is now live and available to all employees on the <u>AHRC Business Links</u>!
You can access it directly here: <u>DEI Resource Hub</u>

This new page is your go-to resource for staying informed and engaged with our DEI efforts. It features:
· DEI policies and program updates
· Recordings from quarterly Lunch and Learn sessions
· DEI webinars and workshops
· DEI calendars for 2025
· Survey forms and tools; including new vendor recommendation and new community partnership forms.
· DEI newsletters

Our goal is to foster a more inclusive work environment—one where every voice is valued, respected, and heard. This hub reflects our ongoing commitment to making DEI a part of our everyday work culture.

We encourage you to explore the page and take full advantage of the resources available.

If you have any questions or suggestions, feel free to reach out to Dr. Sarah <u>snoveiri@AHRC.org</u> or Dr. Elizabeth <u>eadenekan@AHRC.org</u>.

Thank you for being a part of this important journey!

AHRC Nassau
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Citizens Options Unlimited

Employee Inclusive Series

Reporting DEI Incidents to the Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

What is DEI

DEI incidents are defined as situations, interactions, practices, or policies that appear to contradict our organization's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

All employees of AHRC, BCCS, and Citizens are expected to report any instances of discrimination or DEI-related concerns—whether experienced directly or observed in the workplace. You may report anonymously or visibly using any of the communication methods below:

- 📞 Telephone (Hotline): (516) 686-4404
- 📝 Submit DEI Incident Reporting Form: Download, print, complete, and submit the form via one of the following:
    a. Email: Dr. Sarah (snoveiri@ahrc.org) or Dr. Elizabeth (eadenekan@ahrc.org)
    b. Inter-Office or Postal Mail: Executive Office – Mailbox #4
    c. In Person (Face-to-Face): DEI Office, Room 206, 2nd Floor, 189 Wheatley Road, Brookville, NY 11545

SCAN HERE TO DOWNLOAD THE DEI INCIDENT REPORTING FORMS

BCCS — BCCS Reporting form

**AHRC** — AHRC Reporting form

Citizens — Citizens Reporting form

Join us in building a respectful and inclusive work environment!

Call for Submissions, Feedback and Suggestions

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Monthly Newsletter invites contributions to our monthly publication that fits into the following categories:

- News items and announcements
- Short stories
- Recognitions
- Member profiles
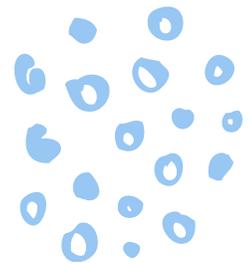
Tell us what you want to see more of!

Send us your feedback!

Submit your materials to:
Dr. Sarah Gonzalez Noveiri
DEI Officer
snoveiri@ahrc.org

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