

New Educators and Diversity Laissez-faire Educators: Diversity Refresher to Hedge Against Extension Program Discrimination

Michael Elonge (MD), Diversity Subcommittee Member

Is there anything potentially discriminatory about Extension programming?

Surprisingly, the answer is yes, there is a potential for Extension program discrimination, especially when the designed program is not accessible and does not demonstrate reasonable efforts to reach its diverse communities. Think about communities that are targets for discrimination based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and other identifying factors; ask yourself if your programs reflect diversity to hedge against discrimination. In other words, the program should be capable of reaching out to serve these various communities. Incidentally, not all programs can serve every diverse community, and if such is the case, a review of the programs is necessary to ensure that it does not intentionally promote inequality. Parity is to neutralize inequality and propel program equality such that the program does not discriminate towards any diverse community. Many seasoned educators use the national census data of their city or county to identify the diversity ratio by race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and other required categories. This approach allows educators to engage in programming that attains greater parity and mitigates program discrimination. In circumstances where parity is not attainable, documentation of reasonable efforts is necessary. The educator should use all reasonable efforts to ensure equal access, equal opportunity, and integration of diversity (race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, age, ability, and more) to reflect entirely in Extension programming (program planning and design, promotion, dissemination, contacts, implementation, and outcome). Consequently, if this is accomplished then the outcome should be nothing less than best practices in diversity programming.

Beware of Extension program discrimination. Remember diversity in your program development and implementation to avoid becoming a promoter of discrimination. Make affirmative action your companion for program development and dissemination, and make civil rights, your practical integrity.

For more readings visit: NIFA's Office of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights.; <https://nifa.usda.gov/civil-rights-equal-employment-opportunity>).

