

# Morgan Support Services

## **Cultural Competency Plan**

### **Philosophy**

Morgan Support Services (MSS) is committed to providing services in an atmosphere and in a manner that are sensitive and responsive to individual differences as they relate to the influence of cultural histories, life experiences, and self-identities.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Cultural Competency Plan is to formalize efforts the agency puts forth in the following areas:

- gathering information related to identified cultural influences
- increasing awareness and understanding of, and sensitivity to, those differences
- designing services that reflect this awareness, understanding, and sensitivity
- determining methods for analysis of these efforts, which in turn will lead to the identification of opportunities for improvement
- address identified shortcomings through systemic changes

### **Identified Cultural Influences**

MSS has identified the following areas to be those in which the agency is most in need of addressing:

- spiritual beliefs and practices
- gender identity and sexual preference
- institutional mentality

In addition, MSS includes in its cultural diversity training, admissions information, and hiring practices the following areas:

- culture
- age
- gender
- socioeconomic status
- language

## **Areas of Impact**

### Intake/Assessment

MSS will strive to be sure that people who are considering our agency to meet their habilitative needs:

- are aware of our agency's commitment to cultural sensitivity.
- are comfortable in providing us with whatever information they deem important regarding their cultural influences and needs.
- are able to ask questions regarding how their particular needs will be addressed.

MSS does not take into consideration race, creed, color, sex, religion, national origin, citizenship, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity when determining whether a person is eligible for services. Disability is only taken into consideration in terms of whether we have the expertise and resources to provide safe and meaningful habilitative services to the person. Information regarding other service providers is made available in the event that MSS is unable to provide services to a person based on lack of expertise and/or resources.

### Hiring

MSS will ensure that people who are being considered for employment with our agency:

- understand and can commit to our philosophy of cultural competency.
- upon hire, are educated about the contents of this plan
- receive ongoing education and coaching in all relevant areas of cultural competency
- experience a work environment that is respectful of and accommodating to cultural diversity

As stated in Human Resources Policy 4.1, MSS shall provide equal opportunity employment to all employees and applicants, without regard to race, creed, color, sex, religion, national origin, citizenship, veteran status, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, and any other protected categories. This policy relates to all employment decisions, including those in connection with recruitment, hiring, training, promotion, compensation, benefits, termination, and all other terms and conditions of employment. Age is taken into consideration in that staff must be at least 18 years of age according to the agency's contract to provide services.

### Services

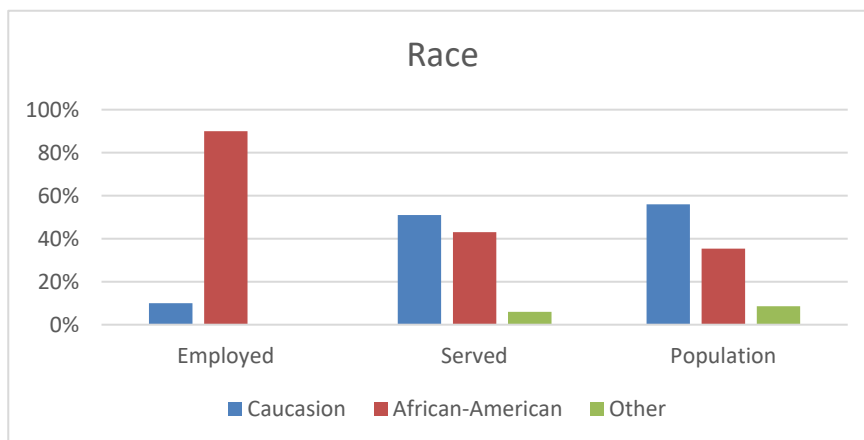
MSS will place a priority on insuring that cultural differences do not exclude anyone's access to, comfort with, or participation in agency activities.

## Demographic Information

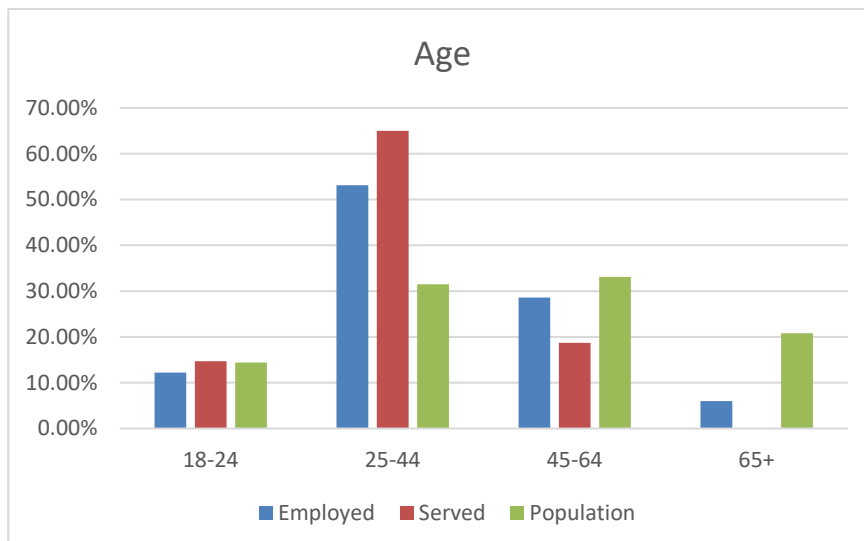
The following demographic information is observed for our primary service area:



\*2019 data estimates for Guilford County, NC (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/guilfordcountynorthcarolina>)



\*2019 data for Guilford County, NC (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/guilfordcountynorthcarolina>)



We neither employ nor support anyone under the age of 18.

\*County Age data 2018 (<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/guilford-county-nc#:~:text=Native%2Dborn%20citizens%2C%20with%20a,County%2C%20NC%20residents%20was%2038.>)

Language: All of our staff use English as their primary language. One of our staff persons is certified as an ASL interpreter. Other staff are learning basic sign language skills. Of those people we support who communicate through speech, all of them use English as their primary language. Three people we support communicate through ASL. One person MSS supports uses a communication device.

#### Spiritual Beliefs and Practices

MSS does not collect information regarding the spiritual beliefs and practices of the people we employ or the people we support as a matter of course. Intake information includes the following question: "What additional information do we need to have in order to best support this person?"

#### Sexual Orientation/Gender Identification

MSS does not ask questions regarding sexual orientation or gender identification on intake or during the hiring process.

#### Institutional Mentality

MSS understands that many of the people who seek services through our agency have been involved with the mental health system for many years, possibly for their entire lives. It is possible that a person with such an experience may not have the same sense of personal freedom and choice that our staff has. Passivity and dependency may limit a person's perception of his/her ability to express personal preferences, make choices, and exercise human rights.

#### Socioeconomic Status

MSS does not collect information regarding the socioeconomic status of the people we employ or the people we support.

### **Current Considerations**

#### Intake/Assessment

MSS does not observe age, gender, or socioeconomic differences between the people employed and those supported to be an issue that would limit the quality or satisfaction with services received. Any information regarding how best the agency can support the person is shared with staff; therefore, should specific spiritual beliefs/practices or cultural considerations be identified, MSS will gather information from the person and his/her support team, perform additional research as needed, determine whether and how accommodations need to be made in the environment or agency activities, and educate staff regarding all these

aspects. If a person uses American Sign Language (ASL) or an individualized form of sign language, MSS will insure that assigned staff are able to communicate with the person as fully as possible. MSS currently employs one person who is fluent in ASL, and several other staff persons have limited fluency. Staff will strive to learn a person's individualized sign language to support communication. Many people the agency supports do not speak. Staff receive initial and ongoing training regarding how to determine a person's preferences, wants, and needs through behavioral observations and other means. Women supported through MSS have female staff persons assigned to or available to them at all times to assist with personal care tasks and to address other sensitive issues that may arise. Men supported through MSS have male staff persons assigned to or available to them as well. Female staff often assist men in personal care tasks, but MSS will honor requests by people supported for a specific gender of staff to provide the needed support.

### Hiring

MSS provides cultural diversity training upon hire and addresses specific issues as they arise through modeling, coaching, and education. Emphasis in training is on helping people to understand how their own experiences, beliefs, and opinions may impact how they perform their job duties and how they treat others. Should a staff person identify his/her own specific spiritual beliefs/practices, cultural, or other considerations that may impact his or her employment, MSS will gather information needed to determine whether and how accommodations need to be made in the environment or agency activities to insure the staff person does not experience unnecessary limitations and what education might be needed to insure others are able to interact respectfully with the staff person. It is a requirement that staff members be fluent in speaking, reading, and writing in English.

### Services

MSS will ensure that all program participants have access to all aspects of programming regardless of any of the categories discussed in this plan, with some exceptions. When accessing community resources, it is possible that limitations for participation may be imposed by that resource. For example, MSS has supported some women in their participation in the Women's Resource Center. MSS will not knowingly develop relationships with any community resources that identify themselves as disallowing participation based on any of the other categories. MSS continually considers the fact that the people we support are likely to have

perceived or actual limitations regarding expression of personal preferences and exercising human rights. The agency strives to ensure that the people we support feel free to and are supported in expressing personal preferences in as many areas as possible. All staff are educated regarding human rights at orientation. Rights and responsibilities goals are developed for the people we support in order to improve the agency's efforts to insure not only those human rights are understood and respected, but also that they are exercised freely. MSS has adjusted some agency-wide activities so as to ensure a person we support is comfortable participating fully in light of spiritual beliefs that preclude celebration of holidays and birthdays.

## **Future Considerations**

### Language

In Guilford County, 24% of households speak a language other than English. It is possible that MSS may be asked to work with a person or family in the future for whom sharing information in English would not be the most effective form of communication. Because of our current entry criteria, it is understood that anyone who is referred to MSS likely will already have been connected with the mental health system and language needs will already have been identified. MSS will take into consideration any such language needs and will determine on a case-by-case basis whether and how the agency will be able to support the person.

### Culture/Spiritual Beliefs and Practices

MSS' experience to date with need to consider culture and spiritual beliefs and practices has been limited to supporting two people and employing another person whose religious practices did not include celebrating birthdays and holidays. It is possible that in the future the agency will need to take other issues into consideration. In that event, MSS will learn more about the particular issues from the person and his or her family and determine how to ensure that the people and the activities at MSS are best able to respect and support the person in light of identified concerns.

### Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity

Although MSS has experience in supporting and employing people who identify as being gay or who face gender identity issues, the agency has not yet identified the need to address any concerns on an agency-wide basis. It is possible that in the future, if issues arise that may compromise the quality or satisfaction of a person's experience with the agency, a systemic change may need to be implemented which addresses education and sensitivity training to these and related issues.