Handbook
Dartmouth Health Employee Resource Groups
August 12, 2021

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1. What are Employee Resource Groups?

Employee Resource Groups (ERG) are voluntary, employee-led, employer-recognized groups of people who join together based on shared interests or life experiences to create a positive and safe space for collegiality and support, personal and professional development, and allyship. ERGs promote diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

DH realizes the value of diversity and is committed to being an employer of choice in an increasingly diverse and global workplace. DH will recognize employee resource groups that welcome and support employees to find communities of shared interests or life experiences.

Employees who don't necessarily identify with a group's life experiences but still want to be involved can join an Employee Resource Group to show support and participate by being an ally. An ally is a person who chooses to align with efforts to improve circumstances for other people. Allyship can mean getting to know people, asking and learning about their experiences, being curious and open minded and learning about the issues that are important to others. An ally acts, learns, listens and yields their privilege. Being an ally is a choice to get involved.

To learn more about or join a current ERG go to Employee Resource Groups (hitchcock.org)

2. Definitions

Employee Resource Group (ERG) - voluntary, employee-driven groups that are organized around shared interests or life experience.

ERG Organizer – members who demonstrate a high degree of commitment to helping develop their ERG, serve as the coordinating and governing council for their ERG, are responsible for planning and implementing ERG events and activities, and meet on a regular basis.

ERG Membership - open to all full- and part-time employees of DH or any of its System Members (Non-employees are not eligible to join ERGs at DH)

Affinity and Belonging Council – includes at least one Organizer from each ERG, but may include other individuals who demonstrate a commitment to helping develop all ERGs, and functions as the coordinating and governing body for ERGs as a whole.

System Member - Alice Peck Day Memorial Hospital, Cheshire Medical Center, Dartmouth Hitchcock Clinic, Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital, Windsor Hospital Corporation, d/b/a Mount Asctuney Hospital, New London Hospital Association, and Visiting Nurse and Hospice of Vermont and New Hampshire

3. Benefits of ERGs

DH recognizes that ERGs have benefits for both DH and its employees, including:

- Attracting, recruiting, and retaining diverse employees.

- Promoting diversity, cultural awareness, an inclusive work environment, and a sense of belonging.

- Increasing employee engagement.

- Fostering professional development and learning through mentoring, networking, open dialogue, and the exchange of ideas.

- Providing a support network for employees.

- Supporting the mission and strategic operating plan of DH by reinforcing DH diversity initiatives in the marketplace and community at-large.

4. ERG Activities

ERG members engage in a wide variety of activities. Some activities involve meeting at events organized by other groups and organizations (e.g., farmers markets). Other activities are organized and hosted by ERGs themselves.

Examples of ERG activities include but are not limited to:

- Activism, e.g., policy discussions, debates, trainings
- Art exhibits and collaborative art projects
- Civic dialogues on current events
- Consultation with DH leadership to advise on strategies and policies for advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging
- Dinners hosted in people's homes
- Educational events, e.g., panel discussions, keynote speakers
- Game nights
- Holiday celebrations
- Meetups at community locations, e.g., farmers markets, restaurants, music venues
- Mentoring relationships
- Movie nights
- Outdoor activities, e.g., hiking, canoeing
- Volunteering and philanthropy
- Welcoming DH newcomers

5. Guiding Principles

Mission

The ultimate purpose for which ERGs are formed is to ensure the success of DH and its mission to improve the health of the population for generations to come.

Respect

To treat people with respect is to have due regard for their feelings, wishes, rights or traditions. When interacting and exchanging ideas with colleagues, we show respect by exercising genuine curiosity about their experiences, perspectives, and opinions. Curiosity creates the possibility for learning and discovery, which is different from exchanges that confirm whatever biases, stereotypes or assumptions we might have about our colleagues based on how they look, how they speak, where they live, how they identify, or the political party with which they affiliate.

Open-heartedness

Being open-hearted is about creating an environment in which people are free to show important parts of themselves to others in the community. Open heartedness requires respect for privacy and confidentiality. It is the root of hospitality (welcoming newcomers) and generosity (giving to others with no expectation of return).

Belonging

Belonging is the experience of being a member of a community, feeling connected to others and caring for each other and for the whole community. When people feel a sense of belonging, they expect some degree of conflict and seek to manage it productively so as to avoid escalation, division and mistrust. The need to create structures of belonging grows out of the isolated nature of our lives, our institutions and our communities. The absence of belonging is manifested in widespread loneliness and anxiety, which affects health care workers acutely.

Restorative practice

Restorative practice is an approach to belonging and community that focuses on repairing harms and building relationships. Restorative practice relies upon open-heartedness and a willingness to take personal responsibility, to apologize, and to forgive for harmful actions. The opposite of restoration is retribution or punishment as vengeance or retaliation for harmful actions.

Civility

Civility comes from the word *civis,* which in Latin means "citizen." Civility includes good manners and listening attentively, but also sharing our own beliefs and values with others through respectful exchanges with one another. Civility also requires a willingness to having our views and biases challenged by others who have a different or opposing perspective. Our ability to act with civility is connected with our ability to understand our own emotions and to manage emotions productively in conversations.

Empathy

Empathy is the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within their frame of reference. Empathy requires awareness of our own defensive behaviors that protect us from real or perceived threats to our status, authority, or sense of self.

Positivity

Positive emotions improve wellbeing and support human flourishing. Positivity is not created by prohibiting difficult conversations or covering uncomfortable facts. Rather, it develops by identifying and building upon strengths, and by highlighting and supporting initiatives that inspire us to contribute our gifts.

6. Practices

ERGs adhere to the following practices to ensure that our activities are aligned with our principles and with DH values and policies.

Safety—We will maintain an environment in which all members, regardless of social identity, religion, political affiliation, etc. are free to show themselves and to share their perspectives and opinions without fear of negative consequences or retaliation.

Speak for ourselves—When we share viewpoints, including those related to public policies, political agendas, parties or candidates, we speak for ourselves and do not serve in the capacity as representatives of DH, the ERG, or any of its members.

Include multiple perspectives— We will strive to include different perspectives and positions when organizing activities that reflect upon public policy or politics, such as when selecting topics/speakers for civic dialogues.

Seek understanding—When exchanging ideas with each other, we will first seek to understand each other's life experiences and how others have come to form their views and opinions.

Separate persons from behavior—When giving feedback to each other, we will focus on the behavior rather than the person.

Apologize and forgive—We will apologize for actions that have negatively affected others, and we will forgive others when they apologize and pursue a good faith effort to repair relationships and rebuild community.

Thank and celebrate—We will express our gratitude for and celebrate the gifts and contributions of each other.

Uphold confidentiality—We will entrust each other with confidence that we will act in a right and proper way, particularly with respect to sensitive information that we share with each other.

7. Guidelines for Organizing an ERG

A. Assess your readiness to co-organize an ERG

Reflect on your personal values. Are you truly passionate about helping to build connection, community and belonging for diverse colleagues at DH? Are there colleagues with particular kinds of life experiences whom you think would benefit by being a part of a supportive community? Do you enjoy social events and activities? If you answered yes to these questions, next take a look at your calendar and your other commitments. Organizing an ERG will take 1-2 hours of your time per week, more in some weeks, less in others. Are you willing and able to move your calendar around to make time for ERGs?

B. Develop the purpose of your ERG

Before taking this step, start connecting with possible collaborators who share your interest and are also ready to get involved. Discuss why you want to create a group and why you believe that Dartmouth-Hitchcock Health needs such a group now to help attract and retain a diverse workforce. For help in this process, see "Developing a Mission for your Affinity Group." Write the results of your group discussion: a 1 paragraph statement about why your group will exist. Include the name of your group.

C. Define your ERG focus areas

Focus areas, often called pillars, are the "what" of your ERG. Every ERG must include community building as one of its focus areas. Other focus areas might include education, mentorship, volunteering, and advising organizational leaders regarding how to make DH a more diverse and inclusive organization. Projects and activities will align with your focus areas. Describe the focus areas for your ERG.

D. Name the Organizers of your ERG and define their leadership roles and responsibilities.

Organizers are ERG members who make a commitment to helping an ERG grow and develop. HR and Communications staff provide support to Organizers, and defined budgetary resources are also available. Serving as an Organizer can be a rewarding leadership and personal development experience. Collaborators who are interested in becoming Organizers should start by talking with their supervisor and letting them know how they see this role fitting in with their personal and professional development goals.

Organizers will be given administrative privileges on the Meetup.com platform that hosts DH ERGs. As an Organizer you will screen and admit new ERG members (Only employees of DH system members are eligible to join DH ERGs). Explore what Co-Organizers want to

contribute to the group (e.g., helping with events, conducting research, reaching out to colleagues, contributing art) and how participating will further their own personal and professional interests. In addition to other roles they might play, at least one Organizer from your group will also participate on the Affinity and Belonging Council (ABC), which is the coordinating and governing council for all ERGs.

E. Review your proposed ERG with the Affinity and Belonging Council

Once you have determined your ERG name, purpose statement, areas of focus, and Organizers, schedule a time to review with the Affinity and Belonging Council (ABC). The council meets by Webex on most Fridays, 12-1pm. All new ERGs must be reviewed and approved by the council.

F. Recruit and listen to new ERG members in order to develop an action plan

After your ERG has been reviewed by the Affinity and Belonging Council (ABC), Organizers have received approval from their supervisors, and HR has created a Meetup.com online group, you are ready to start recruiting new members.

The ABC conducts multiple outreach activities every year. Working together with the other ERGs is an effective way to bring new members into your ERG. As new members join your Meetup Group, meet with them virtually or in person to learn more about their interests and the ideas they have for building the ERG. Consider also a survey of your ERG members to better understand their interests.

Use the input from the listening process to develop an action plan and objectives for your ERG. Objectives will include measures of participation, e.g. "recruit at least 50 new members," and more qualitative measures of impact, e.g., "increase awareness of LGBTQ issues in the workplace."

Map out the action steps to get you to your measurable objectives. Effective action plans include milestones on the calendar of Organizers, roles that collaborators agree to play, and regular check-ins to discuss the status of projects and to solve problems along the way.

8. Time commitment for ERG members

Participation in ERG activities is voluntary. Some events will be held outside of normal working hours, some during meal breaks, and some may be held during normal working hours. You can choose which events to attend. When an event occurs during your normally scheduled working hours, you should make arrangements with your supervisor to ensure that clinical or business duties are not compromised. If you are having trouble finding time in your schedule to participate in events, let us know at Belonging@hitchcock.org.

9. DH policies governing ERGs

- Code of ethical conduct
- Anti-harassment and non-discrimination
- Disruptive behavior
- Social media
- Political activity