

What is the Aspire Health Alliance's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council (DEI Council)

The Aspire DEI Council is composed of a talented, committed group of staff members working to move our organization forward to achieve the following goals:

- Serve clients from all backgrounds in the most effective way possible that welcomes, celebrates and incorporates all of their various identities.
- Create an environment of inclusion for all staff that welcomes and celebrates diverse identities and allows for ongoing feedback regarding issues of diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Create recruitment and retention strategies for staff from diverse backgrounds.

Our Projects This Year

The past twelve months have been very busy for the DEI Council, especially during this time in our nation where divisive politics and continuing racial inequities have led to tragic and horrifying events. One key priority was to provide a safe space for colleagues to share and offer feedback about what they were hearing from clients, what they were experiencing and how the Council could help. We also worked on projects to continue to make Aspire a welcoming environment for colleagues and clients.

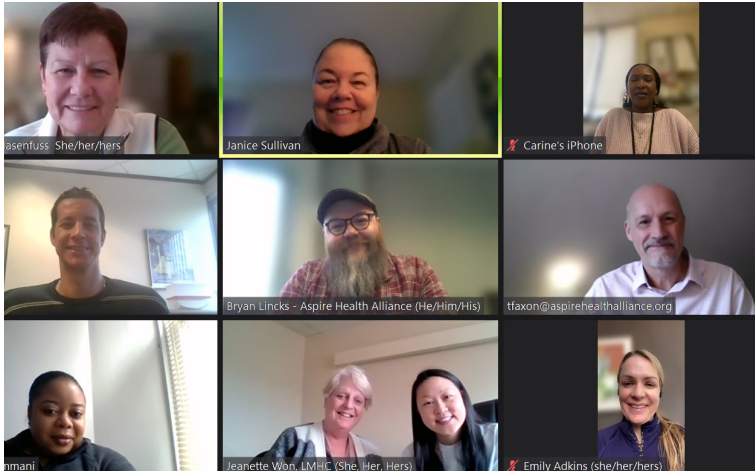
- **Colleague Support Opportunities:** As noted above, at the suggestion of a Council member, Aspire hosted a series of colleague support opportunities over the summer facilitated by Samantha O'Connell, Aspire Chief Psychologist. Feedback was very positive and the Council was grateful to Sam for providing her time and compassion to these gatherings.
- **Improving our Clinical Assessments:** A major project this year, led by the Council members Marlon Braddock, Emily Adkins, Tom Faxon and Jeanette Won, was to improve Aspire's Clinical Assessments in Outpatient Services and Early Intervention to effectively address topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion and to ensure we take into account the traumatic effects of racism, gender violence and oppression.
- **Welcoming and supporting the LGBTQIA+ Community:** Led by Council member, Bryan Lincks and the Council LGBTQIA subcommittee, Aspire participated in the Quincy Pride event at Pageant Field in June 2022. We plan to participate again this year on June 4th. The subcommittee also worked to create pamphlets for staff and clients to educate all on the LGBTQIA+ community and experience. Other work included the projects below.
- **Ensuring Client Name Preferences are Honored:** Many of our clients may have preferred names reflecting their gender identity that may be different from their legal names. The Council, with expertise provided by Michael Hill, ensured that our Avatar electronic health record included clients' preferred names to ensure they feel seen and welcomed.
- **Respecting Gender Identity in Bathroom Access Signage:** The Council provided expertise and helped launch a project to ensure bathroom access signage in buildings where we have control are respectful of clients and colleagues' gender identity. The work continues this year.
- **Supporting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training across the organization:** The DEI Council was critical in advocating for and advising on organizational wide diversity and equity training, including a three part training for providers this past fall. This training will continue this spring and summer for other areas of Aspire to ensure we all have the same foundation and understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion.

About the DEI Council

Current Members

If you have any specific questions about the DEI Council, please feel free to contact any one of the DEI Council Members listed below.

If you are interested in learning more about current members' experiences of being on the council, here are their personal statements on why the DEI council is important to them.



Top row: Marybeth Hasenfuss, Janice Sullivan and Carine Daniel-Manigat.

Middle row: Marlon Braddock, Bryan Lincks, and Tom Faxon.

Bottom row: Aisha Ammani, Maryann Polito, Jeanette Won and Emily Adkins.

Missing: Jane Pham and Julyvette Vazquez.

- “DEI is important to me because it forces us to engage in meaningful conversations, and it offers us an opportunity to discuss issues of diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace.”
- “I joined DEI because I believe for us to help anyone, we need to really see them and to make them feel at home with all the ways they identify. I want to help us to be that welcoming place, for staff and clients, so everyone feels that Aspire is trying to understand who they are and where they come from.”
- “DEI is important to me because it gives an opportunity to learn about issues and to be active in trying to bring about positive change.”
- “Sadly, it isn’t a shocking statement to say that we live in increasing divisive times. Being a member on DEI is a way to combat that division by focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion instead of fear mongering, othering and isolation. As a member DEI I can help ensure that my sphere of influence remains positive and impactful.”
- “I joined the DEI Council to participate and provide support that will leverage diversity and inclusion to its fullest potential so that every client and employee can feel a sense of belonging regardless of their background.”
- “DEI is an important part of what we do to me because it is how we can level the playing field for everyone. While we all may exist at different levels within the company, we should all be treated equally and with respect. I am a firm believer in that all positions are equally important and can’t properly function without every other position. As an example, what good is a help desk without users to support and what use is a clinician without clients to see. We are all woven into the fabric of Aspire and we need to show that we are all equal in all aspects of our diversity.”
- “One of Aspire’s core values is that the well-being of our clients is essential. As such, addressing issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion ensures that we are effectively assessing the full range of their experiences and what’s impacting their mental health, as well as providing the highest quality of care in order to create better treatment outcomes. I feel passionate about providing effective care for our clients as well as creating an inclusive work environment for people of diverse backgrounds. I joined the DEI council to help promote these aspirations within our company.”