Being Intentional about Diversity

Organization
Legacy Health was formed in 1989 when several major hospitals and health care organizations merged. Today, Legacy is a nonprofit corporation that operates six hospitals in the Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area, has more than 50 clinics and employs over 9,700 individuals. Within these facilities, we offer an integrated network of health care services -- acute and critical care, inpatient and outpatient treatment and a variety of specialty services.

Legacy is known for our community commitment by offering safety classes and promoting injury prevention, providing health screenings and classes and following sustainable practices. We are also a leader in charity care, providing $230 million in care to people in need. There is significant growth in populations that have lower income levels, less education, lower health status and lower health literacy. Demographics are shifting with 21% minority communities comprising our primary service area. Integral to the community’s fabric, we value diversity and innovative ideas as we continually look for new and better ways to create a legacy of health for all.

A few statistics:
Nonprofit health system in Portland Oregon
6: hospitals
>50: clinics
> 9700: employees
645: Daily average of patients in beds in Legacy hospitals
1,121: Daily average of patients when factoring in outpatient visits
>52,000: Discharges
2,500: Doctors on medical staff
$1.7 billion: Legacy’s total assets
$230 million — Care to those who cannot afford health care.

Participants
Our vision is to ensure that the importance of diversity at Legacy is not just a verbal commitment but tangible. To bring this vision to reality, Legacy established the Diversity Advisory Council (DAC), comprised of 27 members representing a diverse cross section of leaders from key operations and programs across the system.

The purpose of the DAC is to guide the direction and focus the efforts in the areas of diversity, inclusion and cultural competency and to make diversity a part of Legacy’s culture. The DAC meets monthly and uses a disciplined approach to manage the progress of our comprehensive work plan. Many of the DAC members also lead subgroups in implementing action areas of our work plan.

The co-chairs of the DAC are Sheila Murty Job, Director, Recruitment and Diversity and Bryce Helgerson, Vice President, Hospital Operations. The DAC’s executive sponsors are Dr. George J. Brown, President and CEO and Sonja Steves, SVP of Human Resources.

The Problem
Legacy Health wanted to make an intentional commitment to diversity, inclusion and cultural competency. As Legacy Health continues to strive to be a leader in the health care industry, we cannot afford to ignore the opportunity we have to embrace and infuse diversity systematically and consistently in our organization. We wanted to do it in a way that had tangible results and integrated with the way we did business.
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With the advent of coordinated care organizations and health reform, healthcare organizations need to take steps to address health disparities/inequities, minority health equity, and workforce diversity. Every strategic aspect of health care reform currently being considered, from health insurance coverage to health care access to care to expanding primary care providers to improving quality of care has the potential to ameliorate health disparities and improve the health of minority communities.

We knew we needed a comprehensive approach with a well-defined plan to execute on this desire. We wanted it to be a sustainable commitment that cascaded throughout our organization.

The Solution

We approached the work ahead of us in a systematic manner:

- Develop a commitment statement and goals
- Formal CEO communication on our commitment to our employees
- Establish Executive Sponsors and Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) leaders
- Formation of Diversity Advisory Council to champion the efforts
- Conducted best practice research to develop a multi-year work plan to achieve our stated goals.
- Establish diversity goals and multi-year work plan with accountability to the CEO
- Implemented multi-year work plan through 15 subcommittees led by DAC members

Commitment statement and goals

Our commitment statement was shared with our employees by our CEO as a first step to express our intentionality in this work: At Legacy Health, we strive to be a diverse, culturally competent organization. e have placed a high priority on building a culture that values diversity in how we work with each other, how we deliver care, how we partner with our community and how we do business. Diversity is a moral, social and business imperative for us. We believe that if we do the right thing for our employees, our patients and our communities, then we are doing the right thing for our business.

Diversity Advisory Council (DAC)

- Serve in an advisory capacity to Legacy leaders and to the organization on matters related to diversity issues and initiatives
- Advocate, lead and encourage diversity and inclusion related efforts throughout our organization
- Monitor the achievement and progress of the diversity work plan for Legacy Health.

Goals and Work plan

Our goals are:

- Strengthen workforce diversity
- Expand the diversity and cultural competency of our leadership team
- Support and reflect the needs of our diverse community
- Deliver culturally competent care

The multi-year work plan has 15 key action areas that are aligned under each of the above stated goals and serve as the tactics to achieve our goals. Each action area is led by a DAC member(s) and a team of leaders and employees.

Results

Highlights of selected key action areas:

- Employee Resource Groups (ERGs): Legacy formed ERGs for the first time in our history. Open to all employees and volunteers, these groups foster inclusion by giving individuals a chance to create communities, connections, and a greater sense of belonging while supporting the diversity and
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business goals of Legacy. So far, four ERGs have formed and are active: Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT).

- **Leadership recruitment and development:** We are demonstrating our intentional approach to diversifying our leadership ranks. We have launched mandatory diverse candidate slates and diverse interview slates for our panel interviews for all our leadership positions. We increased the diversity of our leaders by 2 percent within the last 2 years, from 8 percent of our leaders being people of color to 10 percent.

- **Building cultural competence for leaders:** We have developed and rolled out a leadership training module designed to raise awareness of diversity, build cultural competence and illustrate the business case for diversity. We successfully delivered this education to approximately 360 leaders throughout our system.

- **Community needs assessment:** Legacy leaders interviewed over 120 community leaders about health disparities and the best ways to monitor and address health inequities. Legacy then reviewed these findings and other data to identify priority issues and needs. The Legacy Health 2011 Community Needs Assessment provides a roadmap for how Legacy will address these needs beyond our role of providing direct care.

- **Enhance Supplier, Vendor, Procurement and Contracting Programs:** Legacy’s purchasing strategy values minority- and women-owned businesses, which currently comprise approximately 7 percent of purchasing dollars. We have developed a mechanism of capturing and tracking diverse suppliers. This enables us to identify and monitor previously unreported spend with our diversity suppliers.

- **Physical access:** We assembled a system-wide multi-disciplinary team to spearhead a pilot assessment to identify access barriers to our facilities for people with disabilities, employees, patients, families and visitors. All Legacy sites were evaluated in order to improve accessibility and signage of our facilities and services for various diverse populations, including the physically, hearing and sight impaired.

- **Health literacy:** In the fall of 2010, Legacy established the CLEAR (Communication, Literacy and Education Achieve Results) initiative to improve provider and patient communications and ultimately positively impact patient safety and outcomes. This council orchestrated the first of its kind Health Literacy Conference in this region March 2012 and is planning another for March 2013. Over 300 people attended the conference in 2012.

- **Patient experience:** To assess the cultural responsiveness of our clinical staff, patient satisfaction, we have implemented a new question in our Patient Voice (patient satisfaction) survey. The question we ask is, “How satisfied were you with the way we met your expressed cultural needs?” We are the first organization among the clients of the survey vendor, Healthstream, to implement this question.

- **REAL (Race, Ethnicity and Language):** This work is important for collecting demographic information from patients accurately and consistently. We are developing training for front line staff on how to collect this information and we are looking at the fields in the Epic electronic health record to see what questions we would be able to collect. Having this information gives us valuable information to track health outcomes and offer appropriate services to the patient population that comes to our facilities.
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- **Interpreter services:** A toolkit is being piloted to increase the utilization of Legacy’s interpreter services. Video remote interpreting is being explored at a pilot site. A policy is in development to define how to certify employees who may be able to provide medical interpretation.

This disciplined effort has resulted in developing a comprehensive and meaningful approach that will allow Legacy to make significant progress in our desire to be a more diverse and culturally competent organization.

**Next Steps**

We are continuing to monitor our progress on a regular basis and report the progress at our DAC meetings. We make an intentional effort to share the progress with all our employees through a variety of mechanisms such as manager communication toolkits, employee newsletter and our intranet.

**Contact Information**

Sheila Murty Job  
Director of Recruitment and Diversity  
503.415.5017  
smurty@lhs.org