



APTA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan

June 2023

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Introduction

APTA is continuously working to build on its foundation of a commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the physical therapy profession. These efforts are essential to delivering on our mission and vision.

Millions of patients seek physical therapist services every year. In settings ranging from outpatient clinics to hospitals to high schools, PTs treat patients of all ages, abilities, cultures, and racial and ethnic populations. There is significant evidence to support the belief that society benefits from a diverse health care workforce that mirrors the diversity of the population being served, and that cultural competence in practice improves outcomes. The physical therapy community includes individuals representing multiple dimensions of diversity, and it is becoming more diverse every day.

APTA is committed to providing ongoing support to better serve our members, our employees, and society. This inextricably includes expanding organizational efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. We cannot achieve our vision for the physical therapy profession without valuing diversity, achieving equity, and ensuring that individuals feel included.

In 2016, the Board of Directors, identified several bold moves for the next century that helped frame the work of the APTA Board of Directors in developing the association's strategic plan. One of these bold moves was to reignite our spirit of diversity and inclusion within the organization and profession. Our strategic plan has been updated every two to three years to reflect the priorities of the association and profession, and DEI has remained at the forefront.

In 2019, the APTA DEI working group conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to identify, in part, new programs and services that will better reflect the needs of APTA members, the profession, and society. This comprehensive review included an examination of:

- Academic practices such as admissions, the prospective student pathway, and support for diverse learning environments.
- Resources to support providers on their cultural humility and competence journey.
- Allocation and use of current APTA resources, systems, and structures.
- APTA policies related to DEI, such as nondiscrimination and cultural competence.
- Meaningful and measurable metrics to quantify and qualify how the association is achieving its diversity, equity, and inclusion-related goals.
- Best practice examples of other professional associations, institutions, and organizations

The findings from this needs analysis gave APTA a unique opportunity to create a lasting impact on the next generation of physical therapists and physical therapist assistants, and they form the basis of our DEI Initiative.

In 2020, APTA held a series of roundtables with members and staff. These discussions helped to inform DEI efforts moving forward. APTA's president released [a statement on racism and systemic inequality](#) in America.

In 2021, APTA established a standing committee on DEI. Joining other standing committees reporting to the Board of Directors, the DEI Committee provides the Board with strategic counsel and recommendations for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the association and profession.

The DEI Committee offers the strength of their wide range of perspectives, expertise, and free exchange of ideas with thoughtful consideration of their differences. Through its work, the committee landed on the overarching theme of a commitment to building a culture of belongingness in APTA. This aligns with APTA's policies and subsequent efforts. The overarching theme of belongingness will result in members feeling valued and welcomed, with a willingness to build community through connection.

Building on these efforts over the years to fulfill APTA's commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion, the association is launching the APTA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan – "action" being key in that this is a framework for us to act on our words. This inaugural plan outlines necessary actions and best practices to help us live our shared vision of a more equitable and inclusive organization and profession. However, it will evolve over time to respond to new knowledge and changing factors.

The APTA DEI Action Plan comprises a set of guiding principles and three primary areas of action: allyship and advocacy, leadership and growth, and conscious inclusion.

Through our actions, we hope to promote change, empower each other, and challenge biases and discrimination. We hope to create a diverse profession that better enables PTs and PTAs to offer the most appropriate care to individuals and communities. We aim to create environments where members and staff with different backgrounds and perspectives feel that they belong within APTA.

Together we can make positive and lasting change for the better.

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The APTA DEI Action Plan:

1. Benefits the work of the association and profession as the representation of all varied identities, differences, and intersectionality, collectively and individually.
2. Ensures fair treatment, equality of opportunity, and parity in access to information and resources.
3. Is about everyone; it helps to create a climate for a sense of belonging by actively inviting the contribution and participation of all people representing multiple dimensions of diversity.
4. Should be communicated in terms of its rationale behind DEI work so that everyone can see it as a key asset to the association and profession.
5. Recognizes the need to develop individual and collective understanding of DEI and their importance as they relate to APTA's mission and vision.
6. Honors the collective and individual experiences with DEI and efforts in advancing the ongoing process of DEI work.
7. Centers on our [core values](#) as a profession and our [guiding principles](#) as an association on equity and inclusion.

Vision Statement for the Physical Therapy Profession

Transforming society by optimizing movement to improve the human experience.

Mission Statement for the Association

Building a community that advances the profession of physical therapy to improve the health of society.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

APTA is committed to increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the association, profession, and society.

Three Primary Areas of Action

Allyship and Advocacy

Goal	Identify relevant micro-volunteering opportunities and prioritize recruitment, retention, and engagement from historically marginalized populations.
Strategy	Education and training.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote committee vacancies specifically to targeted populations via related affinity groups. Review communications to ensure the words we use are key to creating psychologically safe, inclusive, respectful, and welcoming environments. Inform those involved in the nominating process of the Board's expectation and desired outcome to increase diversity. Explore best practices in elections and term limits to support an inclusive volunteer experience.

Leadership and Growth

Goal	Initiate a leadership training academy for those from historically marginalized populations.
Strategy	Education and training.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract with a consultant well-versed in diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging to assist in developing curriculum for a leadership academy specific to historically marginalized groups. Create additional content for existing leadership trainings.

Conscious Inclusion

Goal	Design means to listen to and learn from a variety of voices that can inform current and future initiatives.
Strategy 1	Create opportunities with invested partners inside and outside of the profession.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create the space to hold town halls or panel discussions. Conduct a strategic DEI survey (internal and/or profession-wide) periodically that will inform, among other initiatives, the action plan. Hold listening sessions with components, members and nonmembers and collaborate with Board-appointed committees. Seek partnerships with minority-owned small businesses and entrepreneurs from underserved communities. Create member engagement groups to include opportunities for engagement, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing.
Strategy 2	Collaborate with various invested partners inside and outside of the APTA to create and share training modules and competencies to foster sustainable, inclusive, and equitable practices across the association.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop training in anti-racism, anti-ableism, allyship training. Include DEI as standard content at APTA CSM, APTA Leadership Congress, and APTA Component Leadership Meeting. Incorporate DEI / unconscious bias training as part of onboarding for leaders. Incorporate inclusion-based, tactical interventions into succession management processes that combat bias and create a broader pool of talent. Promote the PT Moves Me program for inclusion of individuals that are considering physical therapy as a future career.

Learn More

[Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion | APTA](#)

APTA's DEI webpage includes courses, lectures, articles, and more.

[APTA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Toolkit](#)

APTA's Student DEI Project Committee developed this toolkit to help you learn, develop, and engage in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

[DEI Certificate](#)

Complete all courses in this six-part series to apply concepts to their clinical and personal lives with the goal of creating more inclusive and diverse environments, while earning a certificate.

[Component DEI Committee Guidance](#)

APTA components can use this framework to create and maintain an effective committee.

[DEI Activity Report Form](#)

Use this form to share your actions so APTA can identify change-makers and best practices.

Contact Us

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