



## Meeting Minutes #17- Spokane Health Equity Task Force

**Date:** February 20, 2025

**Time:** 10 am PT

**Location:** Zoom

**Present:**

- Todd Holloway
- Jenni Jones
- Jim House
- Sarah Nuss
- Summer Rose
- Simone Ramel-McKay
- Sue Pniewski
- Jes R

**Meeting Facilitators:**

- Denise Grimm (Dee)
- Robin Albrandt
- Christina Alfaro

**Executive Summary:**

- Dee Grimm led a meeting focused on identifying accessibility issues and root causes, emphasizing the importance of understanding "why" before proposing solutions.
- Key areas of concern were discussed, including digital divide and technology barriers, lack of cultural competency and implicit bias, insufficient accessibility training and resources, and transportation policy and scheduling barriers.
- Multiple speakers, including SPEAKER\_06, SPEAKER\_09, and SPEAKER\_01, stressed the importance of including people with disabilities in planning, decision-making, and training processes to improve accessibility and reduce bias.

**Meeting Notes:**

- The meeting continued the ongoing process of identifying priorities for resolving accessibility issues.
- The focus was on identifying problems and root causes, not solutions at this stage.
- Participants were asked to save solution ideas for later discussion.
- The group used a whiteboard to organize and discuss different problem areas.
- Dee Grimm emphasized the importance of focusing on the "why" process to get to root causes before discussing solutions.

**Accessible Information and Communication Issues**

- The group reviewed previously identified issues related to accessible information and communication with the public.
- New issues were added to the existing list:

**Digital Divide and Technology Barriers**

- Digital divide creating accessibility challenges
- Lack of computer literacy, especially among older populations

- Affordability issues preventing access to information
- Lack of connectivity in some areas

### **Challenges for Specific Populations**

- Unhoused populations face unique barriers to accessing information
- Transient populations may have cultural or logistical barriers to information access
- Dee Grimm added a new issue: Lack of training for public information officers (PIOs) on accessibility
- Emphasized the importance of education for emergency management personnel on accessibility issues
- Noted that PIO training often lacks content on accessibility, language access, and bilingual access

### **Bias and Cultural Competency Concerns**

- The group identified two main areas of concern: lack of cultural competency and implicit bias

### **Lack of Training and Education**

- Insufficient training on bias related to people with disabilities
- Organizations not prioritizing cultural competency and bias training due to:
  - Lack of funding
  - Not understanding the importance of such training
  - Quality of instructors - AFN training often not taught by individuals with lived experience
- Dee Grimm suggested that lack of direct experience with people with disabilities may contribute to cultural incompetency
- Noted that increased exposure can make people aware of biases they didn't know they had

### **Implicit Bias and Perception Issues**

- Highlighted the need to shift from a medical model to a social model when considering disabilities
- Lack of representation of people with disabilities in planning and decision-making processes
- Mentioned trust issues between the government and various populations, including those with disabilities
- Emphasized the importance of including people with actual disabilities in training exercises, rather than using actors
- Pointed out issues with labeling and inappropriate language use, citing an example of a bus being called the "international bus"

### **Resource and Training Gaps**

- The group discussed various reasons for the lack of resources in addressing accessibility needs

### **Lack of Understanding of Needs**

- Providers often don't understand the needs of people with disabilities
- People with disabilities may not fully understand their rights under the law
- Noted that even when rights are understood, requests for accessibility are sometimes seen as annoying or disruptive
- Expressed concern about meetings where experiences are shared but no action is taken, leading to loss of trust
- Highlighted that when people are called together to share their experiences and nothing happens, it erodes trust and becomes part of the problem

### **Prioritization and Accountability Issues**

- Providers don't prioritize accessibility training or see it as necessary
- Shared that as an emergency manager, she often has to advocate for trainings related to health equity or special populations
- Emphasized the lack of accountability in tracking and reporting on accessibility efforts
- Highlighted the importance of constant exposure to disability issues, citing an example of a hospital with an integrated independent living center
- Mentioned lack of enforcement as an issue related to accountability

### **Transportation Challenges**

- The group briefly touched on transportation-related issues, with plans to discuss further in future meetings
- Suggested inviting Dean Sidner, who has been focusing on transportation issues in the Puget Sound region, to a future meeting

### **Policy and Scheduling Barriers**

- Concerns about artificial boundaries and policies that prevent crossing county lines for transportation services
- Public transportation runs limited hours, creating barriers for people with non-standard work schedules
- Scheduling limitations force people to plan their work schedules around public transit availability
- Less frequent service leads to longer wait times and inefficiencies
- Dee Grimm summarized these issues as "lack of accessible policies" in terms of time and availability of accessible vehicles

### **Next Steps**



- Participants were asked to continue thinking about and noting down potential transportation issues as homework for the next meeting
- The group plans to revisit these issues and begin discussing solutions in future meetings
- Suggested incorporating more panels and real-life stories from people with disabilities to make training more impactful
- Mentioned an upcoming Accessible and Disability Access and Functional Needs meeting where the new Transportation Coalition in Spokane County will be discussed
- The task force members were encouraged to fill in "stickies" on the whiteboard with their concerns about transportation issues
- Dee Grimm noted that they will review survey responses to identify specific language related to transportation issues
- Access to the whiteboard will be provided as a PDF in the Task Force website under resources

[End of Meeting Minutes]