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Program Name: Cultural Competence Initiative (CCI)

Administering Agency: Ohio Department of Public Safety

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The Ohio Department of Public Safety's Cultural Competence Initiative is a departmental effort to enhance all communications, policies and procedures to be inclusive of Ohio's culturally diverse population. Members of the department's nine divisions review, consider and include diverse populations in business operations, community outreach, publications, and community funding distributions to ensure all members of society receive competent public safety information and services.

The Cultural Competence Initiative (CCI) began in July of 2007 with the appointment of a Steering Committee representing all of the divisions of the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS). The CCI was created to ensure the department's safety messages and services are inclusive and reaching those populations who are underserved or have special needs, including but not limited to LEP (limited English proficient) and people with physical and mental disabilities.

As Ohio's governmental leader in policy, guidance, training, funding and direct services to ensure safe communities in the state, the ODPS's administrative team decided it was critical to address the needs of our underserved citizens and the special needs they may have with regard to their personal safety. Ohio's demographics have grown exponentially in the past ten years when it comes to the immigrant and limited English proficient population. It is these populations, plus other underserved populations, the CCI Steering Committee has prioritized in its outreach and service efforts, especially with regard to motor vehicle registration and identification; traffic safety rules and regulations; preparing for natural disasters or terrorism; investigation of underage drinking and food stamp fraud, and other criminal justice services. Additionally, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that all federally funded agencies must translate vital documents, or provide interpreter services, when a LEP population rises to a certain number or percentage within a community. This is the case within a number of Ohio's

growing communities; and consequently, it is the department's responsibility to communicate life-saving information to them in a form they understand.

The CCI was created by the director of the department by the appointment of approximately twenty individuals, representing the nine operational divisions of the department, to the CCI Steering Committee. These divisions represent over 4,000 employees and include the Administration, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, the Division of Emergency Medical Services, the Ohio Emergency Management Agency, the Ohio State Highway Patrol, the Ohio Investigative Unit, Ohio Homeland Security, the Ohio Traffic Safety Office and the Office of Criminal Justice Services.

The CCI Steering Committee began its journey by learning about and defining "culture" and cultural competence. The department contracted with a consultant for initial training and facilitation. It was recommended we develop a mission statement and strategies to use to implement the mission. The mission statement is:

The mission of the CCI Steering Committee is to encourage Ohio Department of Public Safety employees and partners to reach out to all Ohioans to increase safety, celebrate differences, promote awareness and bridge the gaps between people of all backgrounds with respect and unbiased professionalism.

The Steering Committee members used seven strategies to implement the mission as it relates to their individual division missions, integrating the new CCI mission into the operations of their division. The seven strategies are as follows:

- Reach out to and learn about Ohio's diverse populations
- Enhance state policy and procedures to accommodate the needs of Ohio's diverse populations
- Increase the number of bi-lingual/bi-cultural staff in each of the divisions of ODPS
- Prioritize cultural competence initiatives in federal pass-through funding
- Prioritize cultural competence training opportunities for staff and local partners
- Translate ODPS vital documents to communicate our safety messages to non-English speaking residents and to be in compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Provide systems to access immediate interpreter services where needed in all divisions of ODPS, especially those divisions using and/or distributing federal funding.

Community Outreach

Numerous outreach efforts were made to underserved populations, including community tours, visits to community organizations, community celebrations and events, and invitations to participate in meetings and events for ODPS safety initiatives. Each ODPS division reached the communities that were directly affected by their division mission and efforts.

The department held two “Community Information Sharing Days” (CISD) in the central Ohio area. Leaders and agencies representing central Ohio’s diverse communities were invited to bring exhibits representing their communities and organizations to the department’s auditorium area. Also invited to do the same were local public safety officials and agencies serving the area. At this event, local law enforcement, emergency management, fire departments, and criminal justice agencies were able to hear concerns of the diverse communities and develop relationships. Business cards were exchanged, meetings were held and concerns were communicated in an encouraging atmosphere. The ODPS acted as a state facilitator and leader in guiding the local community to engage in conversations and planning before emergencies and disasters happen. A brief program led by the Director of the ODPS and CCI Steering Committee members welcomed the participants and highlighted the goals of the CCI. The event fostered relationship building, planning and learning about the communities, their culture and their leaders; each is a key element in successful crime prevention and emergency response.

After the first CISD was held, all participants were gathered for an evaluation of the day. Every comment from the participants was positive and reflected how much the event was badly needed in the community. It was recommended this event be replicated in communities around the state. At the second CISD, a brief manual was created on How to Plan Your Own Community Information Sharing Day. Public Safety leaders in each of Ohio’s metropolitan areas were invited to attend to observe the interaction and relationship building going on in the central Ohio area. Representatives of the City of Akron and the City of Cleveland traveled to Columbus despite a snow storm the prior day that closed businesses and schools. Both were impressed with the event, the relationships being fostered and the work being done by ODPS to promote cultural competence. City officials from both cities committed to hosting their own CISD in their respective cities to begin reaching out to their diverse communities.

Community contact lists have been developed and each of the ODPS divisions continues to use the list to include community members in their meetings, programming, and events.

Additionally, many of the committee members attended diversity trainings with consultants, other business associates and diversity leaders. The committee invited numerous community leaders of underserved populations to address them at their meetings, including the Hispanic and Somali communities, the Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual & Transgender (GLBT) community, people with disabilities, and the developmentally disabled. A speaker from the Ohio Civil Rights Commission also addressed the steering committee stating that the committee was on the right course to improve safety services to all populations.

Policies and Procedures

Division policies and procedures were reviewed and enhanced for inclusiveness with additional focus on the CCI mission, especially with respect to inviting members of the diverse communities to be included in the decisions that would affect them.

New departmental administrative forms were developed for requesting translation and interpreter services. Efforts and procedures were implemented to include more diversity in business operations and contracts. A seminar was held by staff especially targeted for the diverse communities on “How to Do Business with the State of Ohio.”

Internal communications, via department newsletter and intranet website, is a constant focus of the CCI Steering Committee. Diversity training, outreach, and events are posted and highlighted regularly. A different population is highlighted and information displayed in the department’s atrium entrance each month (i.e., Black History Month, Women’s History Month; Inter-generational Awareness; the Muslim Faith; Gay/Lesbian Pride Month; People with Disabilities; Hispanic Heritage Month; Mental-Health & Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month; Veteran’s; Inter-Faith Celebrations, etc.)

An internal staff survey was administered by the department’s research department, which brought to light many of the issues needing to be addressed with department hiring practices, preferential treatment, prejudices, etc. Consistent with historic controversy on diversity and cultural divides, the individual comments and interactions brought about by this initiative have been spirited, deliberate, dramatic, emotional, and personal. Due to the work of the CCI Steering Committee and the steadfast efforts to overcome and to continue celebrating diversity, the awareness has been high and the departmental culture has changed to the benefit of the communities served.

Two departmental divisions held cultural potlucks highlighting the individual cultures of each employee, including ethnicity, family characteristics, spirituality, educational background, interests, etc.

The department is still working on implementing a formal policy institutionalizing the mission of the CCI Steering Committee and maintaining a standing committee to address the ever changing cultures of Ohio’s individuals and common populations.

Staff Reflecting of the Populations Served

The department has increased the number of bi-lingual/bi-cultural staff, but is not yet reflective of the population demographics. Due to the hiring freezes and the economic downturn, new hires have been limited, and the process has been challenging.

The Human Resources department has increased its outreach to Ohio’s minority communities through outreach efforts and job fairs, especially those focusing on diverse and minority populations. Priority has been given to bi-lingual hires to respond to the growing need, especially for police dispatcher positions and direct services at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. Due to some of the specific law enforcement needs and necessary

expertise for some of the positions, recruitment, although deliberate, has been a challenge.

Prioritizing Federal Pass-Through Funding

A few of the divisions of the ODPS receive federal funds to administer and pass through to local governments for public safety initiatives. A condition of receiving federal funds is to be in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which requires any agency, state or local, who receives federal funds to ensure all populations are served equally, without discrimination, and that all vital documents and life-saving information is accessible to Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations. To be in compliance with this law, the divisions of ODPS have been translating vital documents and providing interpreter services where needed. Even those ODPS divisions not receiving federal funding have been translating vital documents to accommodate the needs of our LEP populations.

Not only have translation and interpreter services been provided, but ODPS federal grant administrators provide safety program funding to community organizations to ensure diverse communities are participating at all levels of public safety.

Training

Training for staff and local community partners is on-going. The Administrative division of the department developed and institutionalized mandatory cultural competence training for all supervisors and optional training for staff.

The department brought in numerous guest speakers and trainers for the CCI Steering Committee, including representatives of the Somali, Hispanic, and GLBT communities; People with Disabilities; and the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. The Ohio State Highway Patrol has included mandatory diversity training for all of their law enforcement officials.

Trainings were also provided by the department to local communities, such as the “Survival Spanish for Law Enforcement” and “Culturally Competent Grant Writing” offered by the Criminal Justice Services division.

The Ohio Homeland Security Division has its own cultural diversity liaison and works directly with Ohio’s diverse communities and local law enforcement on any issues concerning homeland security.

An educational seminar addressing compliance with the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act is currently being organized for the department. This information will also be presented to the department’s sub-grantees at the local level.

Translation and Interpreter Services

All vital information has been or is currently being translated in to Hispanic and Somali languages for our growing communities. The department works with federal partners to provide vital information in other languages to other LEP populations in Ohio, but is

focusing on these populations as a priority. As the department continues its efforts, other populations will be addressed.

The Cultural Competence Initiative is a creative approach or method in that it encompasses every part of the department's administrative system. It does not merely consist of an Equal Employment Officer or Diversity Trainer. The leadership of the department has made the CCI effort a priority and has held each division accountable for integrating culturally competent practices within their divisions. The Steering Committee presented an oral Six Month Action Plan report to the department's director and a second oral Report to the Director on its implementation of the plan. Not only did each division need to deliver to the Director on their goals, but they were showcased amongst their peers. This was also a motivating factor in their work product. A written report on the status of each division has been requested for the end of two years (Summer 2009).

The CCI start-up costs were approximately the cost of the professional consultant to initiate the work. (Approximately \$4,500) The program's annual costs have not been evaluated as they have been absorbed into the overall administrative expenses of each division's staff time, training, translated/ printed materials and interpreter services, where needed. Federal funds were able to absorb time for federally funded personnel and the printed materials budgeted to their division. All costs were absorbed into Administrative costs.

Much work still needs to be accomplished, but we have learned that cultural competence is forever changing and the efforts need to be on-going. The CCI effort has truly impacted the department's community services, relationships, and overall competence in community safety services. As each individual ODPS staff member continues to learn and become more competent in their services to all of Ohio's populations without discrimination, local partners and community members will continue to feel our inclusiveness. Although the program has not been evaluated for its effectiveness, the affirmations from community members, government leaders, internal staff and others has given us the confidence that a positive difference has been made and diverse community members feel welcomed and served by our efforts.

Challenges faced in this effort included a general feeling of internal resistance to change; emotional responses and outward acts of prejudice; and challenges with hiring diverse community members skilled in law enforcement and specialized training.

The benefits have far outweighed the obstacles: we are building relationships with our diverse communities and they are feeling supported; and, consequently, more safe. They are more apt to contact us for assistance knowing we will respond. Many have expressed their feelings of gratitude and have praised our efforts in their communities and to other government leaders.

The ODPS Cultural Competence Initiative has been increased awareness and made the department stronger in its mission to educate, protect and serve all of Ohio's citizens, residents and visitors. It is with the above mentioned strategies, and the implementation

of them, that the Ohio Department of Public Safety respectfully submits the Cultural Competence Initiative for a 2009 Innovation Award.