

Eradicating Structural Racism and Creating a Culture of Inclusion

CCSI has not been quiet internally about the commitment to eradicating structural racism. The leadership team has also been very open to sharing that collectively, they did not know a lot about the ins and outs of formal Diversity & Inclusion work. They all agreed that it was necessary; not only to help the organization grow and prosper, but also to allow employees to be the best at what they do for the organization, for their families/friends and for the community. All of these sentiments and commitments are what attracted me to the Chief Diversity Officer position at CCSI.



My name is Kesha Carter, and I began working at CCSI on April 30, 2018 as the Chief Diversity Officer. Due to my multi-year history working as a Diversity & Inclusion practitioner at both Paychex and Excellus BCBS, I immediately recognized the potential for amazing Diversity & Inclusion work following conversations with the leadership team at CCSI. I knew that I would be able to fully utilize and apply my certification as a Diversity & Inclusion Professional as well as my Six Sigma Green Belt Certification in conjunction with the knowledge I have acquired while obtaining a PHR (Professional Human Resources) Certification, to lead the D&I efforts at CCSI. These efforts include bringing the commitments of eradicating structural racism and creating a culture of inclusion where employees could feel safe to show up as their authentic selves every day.

I am excited to utilize the rich diversity of the entire CCSI workforce to create continuous growth through education and collaboration. Inclusion is instrumental in breaking down barriers, providing equitable opportunities and involving employees in organizational and community initiatives in order to fulfill the organization's mission. This is a multi-phased approach with each new level on the spectrum of diversity & inclusion resulting in growth and new experiences for individual employees and the organization. As we continue this journey together, it's important to know some behaviors associated with creating an inclusive environment:

1. Every employee should get to know the diversity goals and vision of the organization and the connection to overall business objectives. Commit to the process by understanding how diversity impacts your role, and how your role impacts the success of the diversity initiative.

Inclusionists take responsibility. They hold themselves and others accountable for the ability to articulate the organization's mission, values and culture.

2. Participate in employee engagement surveys and respond as openly and honestly as possible. Finding an internal champion with whom you can comfortably express concerns and/or elicit advice can be instrumental in supporting your efforts.
3. Actively engage in the diversity effort. Consider becoming a mentor, mentee, or part of a co-mentoring relationship. These activities require a commitment of time, but represent a valuable opportunity for personal and professional development. Inclusionists engage new employees. Employees can only accelerate their growth and success when they know the culture of the organization. Stay tuned for more on this as our work in this area continues to unfold.
4. Become culturally competent. Take the time to learn about different cultures, races, religions and backgrounds represented by your colleagues. Ask your coworkers to share some of the customs and practices associated with their cultures. Become familiar with diversity-related terms and, if you err, apologize and ask for help. Inclusionists strive to get to know others every day, not just when a specific need or crisis arises. CCSI's cultural competence team is a terrific resource in this area as well.
5. Treat people in a way they wish to be treated rather than the way you wish to be treated. Common social activities and practices that are comfortable for you may not be comfortable for everyone. Do not tell offensive jokes that may alienate those who are different from you — even if they are not present at the time. Most importantly, be respectful always. Diversity exists everywhere — not just in the office. Take these diversity principles into your community and your home. Inclusionists treat people as individuals. If everyone were treated the same, we wouldn't know how to seek and leverage the diverse talents, skills and experience of people in the workplace.
6. Drive positive change in the organization. Be a spokesperson for diversity issues that are not necessarily your own. Any organization will find it difficult to ignore the powerful voice created when groups representing different diversity dimensions unite.
7. Welcome ideas that are different from your own and support coworkers. The creativity that comes with diversity can help you generate new ideas or improve a process already in place. It can also make work more interesting, engaging, and fun. Inclusionists are not afraid to learn from others regardless of title, job function or paygrade. They understand that everyone has something valuable to offer.

8. Understand the diversity elements you personally bring to the organization. Diversity comes not only in the form of culture, race, and gender but also includes elements such as socio-economic background, education level, geographic location, sexual orientation, thought, and many others. Each of us brings to the table a lifetime of experiences and knowledge. Each of us is different and adds value to the organization because of these differences.
9. Commit to continuous improvement. Be willing to learn, accept feedback, and listen to the concerns of those around you. Even the most enlightened individual can find opportunities for growth. Inclusionists ask, "What if I'm wrong and the other person is right?" and seeks to explore more ideas.
10. Communicate and educate. Diversity work is a journey, not a destination. It takes time, patience, and perseverance. Inclusionists help to educate others about the organization's culture and behaviors associated with being inclusive.