

PATIENT VOICES NETWORK: CONSIDERING DIVERSITY

Diversity is an important topic in health care. It is essential that voices from a variety of different backgrounds are included in health care decision making. When you are thinking about the diversity of patient experiences in your project, consider whether the diversity of your patient partners reflects the population it serves. Who are the people your project is going to affect?

When we think of diversity, we often think in terms of marginalized groups and unique populations. However, when discussing health care, diversity in terms of patient experience is important too!

This resource provides some helpful tips to help ensure that you have a diverse group of patient partners involved in your project.

GROUPS:

Here are just a few of the many categories to consider to when recruiting for patient partners:

Age	look across a wide age span, from youth and young adults to the elderly.
Gender	ensure you have good representation across gender identities.
Ethnicity	consider a spectrum of diversity in language, heritage, culture, and nationality within each ethnic group.
Socioeconomic status	seek to include individuals from all educational and financial walks of life.
Geographical location	look to have representation from both urban and rural communities.



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CONSIDERATIONS FOR TARGETED RECRUITMENT:

Working adults:

- For those working during the day, hold meetings outside of working hours or obtain feedback on times and dates before or after meetings.

Caregivers of children, youth and seniors:

- For parents of younger children or those caring for the elderly, think about covering costs such as childcare and eldercare.

At-risk socioeconomic status:

- Are you able to cover transportation costs such as mileage or provide parking, transit or taxi passes? Try to book travel and accommodation expenses through your organization.
- Consider meeting homeless/marginalized patient partners at locations that may be more convenient for them, such as shelters or soup kitchens.

Culture differences:

- Be aware of special cultural considerations and language barriers when working with people of different backgrounds.

Disabilities:

- Ensure the meeting location is accessible for people with disabilities. Consider physical access and accommodation for support personnel to attend and assist if needed

Mental health and addictions:

- If possible, offer to meet members of this population where they are, and support their economic needs to participate.
- Be conscious of safety in your planning. Assess the need for peer support on site, a safe space, and access to naloxone kits.

Children and youth:

- Find out if you need parental consent to engage those under age 18.
- Encourage them to bring a friend to make them more comfortable.
- Connect through schools and youth groups.

See our resource on engaging young adults.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR TARGETING A DIVERSITY OF HEALTH EXPERIENCES:

- What health care experience and/or areas of care are you hoping to engage?
- Are you looking for those who have accessed the health services personally? Or would you consider the role of caregivers, friends and neighbours who have supported patients?
- How recent do you want their experiences to be? Six months, one year, five years?
- Is it important that the experiences are from a specific health region or location? Patients who have accessed services outside of their health region, province or country can bring a unique perspective.
- Look to include both positive and negative experiences.

Hopefully this document has given you some fresh ideas about how to be inclusive and embrace diversity in your patient engagement projects. While recruiting a diverse group can be challenging at times, a variety of different cultures, backgrounds and perspectives will provide for rich insights and meaningful engagement. And don't forget – if you have questions about how to connect with specific groups, our engagement leaders are always here to support your projects and answer any of your questions!



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