

Nebraska Synod Guiding Principles, Policies and Practices Relating to Accessibility, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity (ADEI) for Nebraska Synod Sponsored Youth Events

Adopted by Synod Council November 2024

***Principles** directly articulate guiding theological statements or core values.

***Policies** are formally adopted guidelines that establish specific behaviors for an organization

***Practices** are standard, accepted behaviors in accordance with approved policies. They can be in writing but are not formally adopted or approved by supervising groups.

Glossary

ADEI: Accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion/inclusivity

LGBTQIA+/BIPOC: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersexual, Asexual, all identities/Black, Indigenous, People of Color

Non-binary: gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine, identities which are outside the gender binary

Gender Identity: person's innate identification as man, woman, or another gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth.

Accessible: when a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally integrated and equally effective manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.

People First (Identity first) Language: emphasizes the person before a diagnosis, also recognizing a person's preference for terminology and identity.

Marginalized: treated as insignificant or peripheral

Synod Sponsored Youth Events: Events sponsored by the Nebraska Synod which include registration through the Nebraska Synod and are open to all Nebraska Synod youth of the within the event designated age group.

Youth: Any person under age 19, and any person who is still enrolled in high school at the time of registration for a synod-sponsored youth event (even if that person is age 19 or older at the event).

Guiding PRINCIPLES of Accessibility, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Synod Sponsored Youth Events

Regardless of race, gender, developmental, cognitive, or physical ability, we are all beloved children of God, made in the image of God and full members of the Body of Christ. This we proclaim and celebrate!

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you.” Jeremiah 1:5

We seek opportunities to learn, strengthen and grow in ministry with and alongside LGBTQIA+/BIPOC youth and youth with disabilities in our congregations and communities. Our welcome of LGBTQIA+/BIPOC youth and youth with disabilities needs to be specific, regularly articulated, and lived out.

1. It is easy for marginalized people to hear “all are welcome” as “all are welcome but me”. Therefore, simply saying “All are Welcome” is not enough.
2. If we aren’t actively, and intentionally articulating and living out this welcome, then we are (unintentionally or not) unwelcoming to people who seek welcoming.
3. We need to be aware of, and address in our ministries, specific safety and health concerns relating to marginalized young people. They are at greater risk of physical, psychological, spiritual and social violence than the general teen population.

Synod Youth Events Accessibility, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion POLICIES

Registration

1. We only ask for gender information when needed.
2. When asking for gender information in registration material we offer male/female/non-binary gender options.
3. We will ask if participant has any special needs, including but not limited to dietary restrictions, physical assistance, audiovisual assistance, translation, or sensory needs.
4. Where needed, we will translate registration forms into native languages.

Housing

1. Housing is assigned according to the gender identity of the participant designated on the registration form.
2. If event participants or their parents/guardians have concerns regarding housing assignments, they are encouraged to contact an event leader.
3. Housing for non-binary participants will be determined on an individual basis in consultation with the participant and their parents/guardians. Priority is given to ensuring the needs and comfort of the participant.
4. Housing will be assigned to meet accessibility needs designated on registration form in consultation with the participant and their parent/guardian.
5. The responsibility for determining event housing resides with the Synod staff member relating to the event. (Exception: when housing is assigned by church group, the church group leader holds responsibility for assigning housing and will determine the

appropriate amount and type of rooms needed for their participants, based on the requests of the parents, and will communicate needs to synod staff).

Meeting Spaces

1. Meeting spaces will have clearly marked accessible entrances and accessible seating.
2. For loud or visually stimulating activities, meeting spaces will provide a quiet, “sensory safe” space that adheres to safe gathering policies.
3. Videos, livestreams and zoom events will provide closed captioning on the screen.
4. Large print materials and audio assistive devices will be made available as needed.
5. Allergy free options will be provided when communion is served.

Training

1. Each Synodical sponsored Youth Event will provide training, as relevant and appropriate relating to the needs of LGBTQIA+/BIPOC youth and youth with disabilities for the planning team and other key event leaders.
2. Basic event orientation for adult participants and volunteers at synod youth events will include information relating to the needs of LGBTQIA+/BIPOC youth and youth with disabilities. This could be provided in writing in advance of the event or offered at or near the start of the event.

Bathrooms

1. Participants and guests will have access to bathrooms that correspond to their gender identity.
2. Every effort will be made to provide at least one all-gender single-occupancy bathroom at synod sponsored youth ministry events.
3. Participants will have access to a handicapped accessible restroom at synod sponsored youth ministry events.

General Accessibility, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion PRACTICES for Synod Youth Events

1. LGBTQIA+/BIPOC and people with disabilities will be intentionally invited and welcomed in leadership, planning teams and all other gatherings.
2. Efforts will be made to hold meetings and events where all-gender single-occupancy, accessible bathrooms are available.
3. We will make efforts to provide training and resources on accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusion for congregations relating to safe, healthy ministry with young people.
4. We will encourage the practice of inclusive language by inviting people to share their personal pronouns and by using positive, people-first language.