

A stylized graphic of a hand with fingers pointing upwards, composed of overlapping, rounded shapes in various colors: orange, red, purple, green, and blue. The hand is positioned on the right side of the page, with the palm facing left. A dark blue rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the hand, containing text.

DAMIEN CENTER 2022-24

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY &  
INCLUSION PLAN**

## DEAR STAKEHOLDER,

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is important in our society to help establish awareness and transform mindsets, behaviors, and practices to create and sustain an equitable and inclusive environment.

Our DEI Plan Steering Committee spent the last year creating goals for our organization centered on diversifying our hiring practices, developing and supporting staff of marginalized and/or minority backgrounds, and adhering to guidelines and procedures which necessitate commitment and accountability.

This process was conducted in alignment with our five-year organizational strategic plan designed to run until 2027 and incorporated many important strategies that seek to create diversity, equity, and inclusion within the programming and services we offer.

Together, these strategies seek to build new philosophies, policies, services, and other structures to guide us into a more inclusive and equitable future as an organization.

We are deeply indebted to all the staff and Board members who contributed to the creation of this plan, without their insight and perspective, this project – and the work of Damien Center as a whole – would not be possible.

A special thanks to our DEI Plan Steering Committee of staff members Wendy Catalan Ruano, Robert Kellman, Caelan Lee, DyNishia Miller, Alan Witchey, Juan Carlos Venis and board member Brian Jarman.

Sincerely,



Bill Pritt  
Board President



Alan Witchey  
President & CEO



DyNishia Miller  
DEI Officer

## SINCE OUR FOUNDING IN 1987...

The Damien Center has worked tirelessly alongside the Indianapolis community to end the HIV epidemic for more than 35 years. Through its one-stop-shop model of care, the organization seeks to address myriad of barriers faced by those most impacted by the virus and ensure they're able to thrive and prosper.

Damien Center has always sought justice and equity for its' clients as they struggle against systems full of inequities which deny them access to care and limit their quality of life. To address these inequities, our organization created a strategic plan centered on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).

In partnership with Optimist Business Solutions (OBS), Damien Center leadership collaborated with staff and Board members to assess the state of the organizations' current DEI efforts and identify focus areas where Damien Center could work to improve its dedication and adherence to the principals of DEI.

The resulting 2022-24 DEI Plan outlines a series of strategies and tactics essential for fostering belonging and an inclusive environment at Damien Center, one which not only reflects the diversity of our client base, but also creates equity for underrepresented persons on our team. We intend to ensure our staff and clients feel welcomed, valued, and respected within our walls.

## EQUITY STATEMENT

Damien Center's values of Dignity, Collaboration, Equity, Accountability, Quality, and Innovation are core examples of our commitment to the health of and social equity for people from diverse communities.

These communities include but are not limited to those living with HIV/AIDS, the Black/ African American, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), Latin, and Indigenous communities, the LGBTQ+ community, the aging community, those with disabilities, those suffering from homelessness, and those struggling with substance use disorder.

As Indiana's oldest and largest AIDS service organization, it is our responsibility to support, address, and be the example of equitable changes in our society.

## OUR VISION FOR DEI AT DAMIEN CENTER

Our 2022-24 DEI Plan is our attempt to move the needle forward, include marginalized members of our community, and hold ourselves accountable. Our vision for DEI at Damien is that all staff are respected, valued, heard, and given opportunities to grow and prosper.

In pursuit of this vision, we've solidified the broad and often ambiguous concepts behind DEI into a set of concrete and specific definitions:

### DIVERSITY

Diversity refers to the similarities and differences, both visible and invisible, that exist among people. Diversity includes values, beliefs, lifestyles, abilities, ethnicities, ages, genders, experiences, thinking styles, backgrounds, orientations, behaviors, cultures, socioeconomic status, and the innumerable other aspects that shape an individual's personality and unique identity.

### EQUITY

Equity is the quality of being fair and impartial or equal treatment; Recognition that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge – and eliminate – imbalances wherever they persist.

### INCLUSION

Inclusion is inviting and embracing the full breadth of perspectives, fully engaging those perspectives, and leveraging them to achieve our individual and collective potential. Inclusion requires action. Inclusion is more than accommodating or allowing diversity. It is about building strength through the inherent value of diversity and seeing it as a fundamental part of all we do. It requires a focus on how each of us makes decisions and a willingness to recognize and eliminate barriers to inclusion.

## PAST EFFORTS

Damien Center has a long commitment to advancing a culture where all people can come together and where we work to equitably improve the health of our clients and patients. We recognize through this process that our work in DEI is elevated to new importance, and we also want to celebrate the efforts that have come before this plan. Damien Center has implemented many past DEI initiatives in the past including:

- Creating an annual Diversity Plan to address DEI initiatives.
- Promoting active and ongoing conversations about inequities and how racism and racial justice impacts our programming and activities.
- Training staff about health inequities for LGBTQ+ populations and black, Indigenous and people of color, including Interrupting Racism training for all staff.
- Hiring purposely representative staff of our client community including race, HIV status, and LGBTQ+ identification.
- Hiring our first DEI Officer, DyNishia Miller, in 2021, who reports directly to the CEO and is empowered to make changes to improve culture, hiring and promotion practices, and professional development.
- Contracted Optimist Business Solutions (OBS), a DEI consulting firm, to help revise, update and hold us accountable.

These efforts and others highlight the value DEI has held for our organization and this new plan seeks to create meaningful change and integrate DEI into our everyday work.

## NEEDS DRIVEN BY THOSE WE SERVE

Damien Center has been strategically growing its programs and services to address disparities in care that impact the most vulnerable members of our community. We use epidemiological data, feedback from clients, and community gaps analyses to determine the best approach to program expansion and assure long-term sustainability for these new programs. Several examples of this recent growth include:

- Project ION is a five-year (2020-25) Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA) funded project that provides navigation services and peer recovery for Black and Latin MSM (Men who have Sex and Men).
- The Underground is a five-year (2022-2027) CDC funded program to reduce new HIV infections, increase access to HIV care and prevention services, and promote health equity among Young Transgender Persons of Color.
- HOLA received a 5-year (2021-2026) CDC grant targeting Latin individuals for HIV prevention activities to reduce new HIV infections in the county, increase access to care, and promote health equity for Latin MSM.
- Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) provides housing assistance and case management for LGBTQ and parenting youth.
- HOPWA Elder Housing Program (2022-2025) targets low-income individuals living with HIV/AIDS in Central Indiana with a specific focus on individuals who are aged 55 and over.
- Housing Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking is a three-year Department of Justice grant awarded in 2021 providing housing and supportive services to victims of human trafficking.
- Expanded LGBTQ+ Mental Health Services started in July 2022 with funding from the Indiana Division of Mental Health and Addictions to significantly expand its LGBTQ+ mental health services.

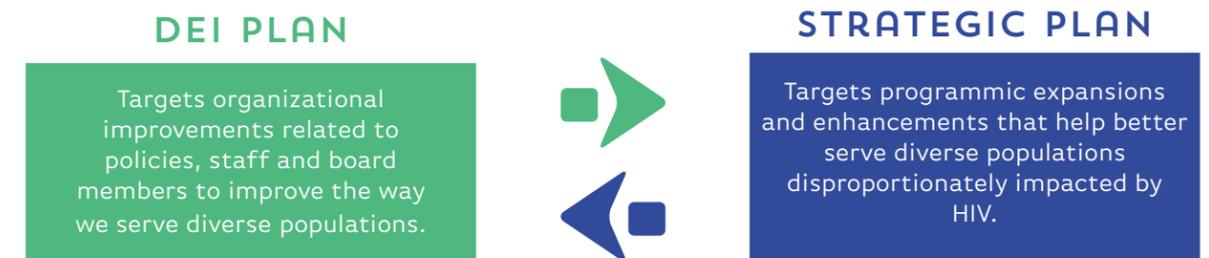
Many of these programs have brought a long-needed focus on the most disenfranchised populations we serve necessitating that our staff is more representative of those we serve, our policies create an inclusive framework, and our outcomes are equitable for all who seek a home for care.

## STRATEGIC PLAN INTERSECTION

Damien Center partnered with the consulting firm Hedges and Associates to revise its Vision, Mission, and Values, and developed a five-year Strategic Plan to expand our reach and embark on new and exciting service opportunities.

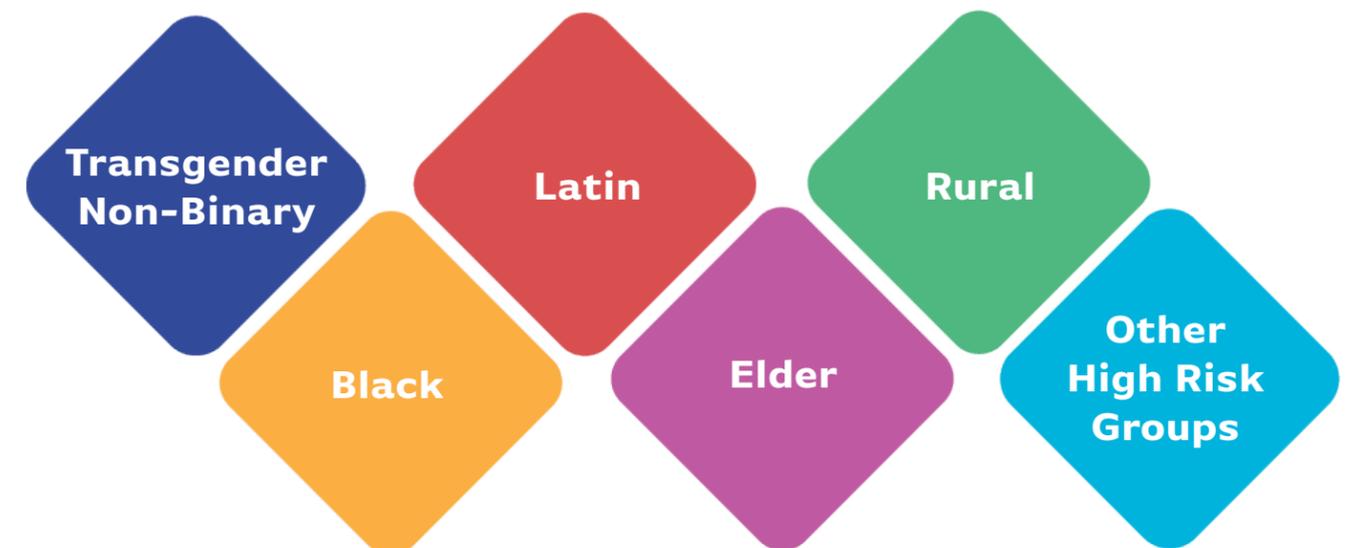
During the more than six-month planning process, we engaged a wide variety of stakeholders and spent time learning what is needed most from the community. DEI was central to that process and can be seen through various strategies embedded in that plan. Below will highlight key intersectionality with our DEI philosophies.

The full plan can be found on our website; the Strategic Plan and DEI Plan are meant to complement and act in tandem with each other.



## CRITICAL POPULATION ENGAGEMENT

Our 2022-27 Strategic Plan makes a point of guaranteeing that quality, equitable care is accessible for as many under served populations as we can possibly reach. Through the plan, six priority populations were identified that were most disenfranchised and most critical to the success of our work.



## PLANNING PROCESS

To tackle the myriad intricacies and nuances that a comprehensive DEI plan entails, Damien – alongside Optimist Business Solutions – embarked on an effort to build a strategy that identified tangible actions the organization could undertake to address its DEI deficiencies, with measurable outcomes and metrics for success. The process included:

- 1** One hundred Interviews conducted with staff by our DEI Officer to determine the base state of DEI efforts at Damien Center.
- 2** Assembly of a DEI Plan Steering Committee consisting of our DEI Officer, President and CEO, Board members, and additional staff members who represent diverse perspectives.
- 3** Extensive vetting of three proposals for development of our DEI plan from three consulting firms – ultimately resulting in the approval of the proposal submitted by Optimist Business Solutions.
- 4** Staff assessment conducted by Optimist Business Solutions to expound the DEI needs of the organization.
- 5** Biweekly planning sessions spearheaded by our DEI Plan Steering Committee in conjunction with consultants to develop comprehensive goals for the organization, and the actions necessary to achieve them.
- 6** Final review and revision process conducted with Damien leadership and management.

## 2022-24 DAMIEN CENTER DEI ACTION PLAN

Our DEI Plan Steering Committee honed in on six goals that will further create an inclusive, welcoming environment where staff are respected and valued for their work.

The core ideals include developing a common understanding of DEI work, developing and revising policies and procedures that support DEI, creating a diversified staff and leadership structure, creating staff development and retention, assuring all staff are paid equitably, and creating diversity among our vendors and suppliers.

These represent a foundation from which we can create sustainable practices and concrete policy for our organization.



## 1 ENSURE ALL EMPLOYEES UNDERSTAND DAMIEN'S DEI INITIATIVES.

- 1A. Develop, implement and track DEI required training and professional development for all staff.
- 1B. Create a written tool to standardize ongoing DEI discussions at department levels.
- 1C. Revise the employee annual review process to include quantifiable DEI performance competencies.

## 2 FORMALIZE A MEASURABLE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM OF DEI POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND PRACTICES.

- 2A. Develop and implement vetting process to ensure intentionality when determining Damien's community involvement.
- 2B. Conduct a DEI disparity analysis of policies and procedures.
- 2C. Develop DEI policies and procedures identified through the disparity analysis.
- 2D. Educate all staff, volunteers and board members on DEI policies and procedures.

## 3 ESTABLISH EQUITABLE PAY PRACTICES ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION

- 3A. Complete a compensation analysis for all positions.
- 3B. Conduct a pay equity and diversity analysis in conjunction with the compensation analysis and correct any inequities that are discovered.

## 4 CREATE STANDARDIZED RECRUITMENT AND HIRING PROCESSES THAT LEAD TO MORE DIVERSE CANDIDATES.

- 4A. Benchmark client demographics with staff, volunteer and board demographics.
- 4B. Develop targeted outreach plans to reach candidates in specified populations based on the benchmarking results.
- 4C. Develop a standardized Interview process and implement training for hiring managers on equitable interviewing practices.

## 5 BUILD AN EQUITABLE FRAMEWORK THAT IMPROVES ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION.

- 5A. Establish a consistent process for implementing and reporting results for our annual Culture Survey.
- 5B. Create and implement Employee Resource Groups.
- 5C. Create sustainability efforts for ERGS, internal committees, and other DEI efforts.
- 5D. Assess and develop a plan to implement a training program for current and future leaders.
- 5E. Benchmark retention, turnover, and promotion rates by demographics.

## 6 STANDARDIZE VENDOR EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES TO ENSURE SUPPLIER DIVERSITY THAT IS REFLECTIVE OF DAMIEN'S DEI VALUES.

- 6A. Conduct an audit of all current vendors to identify which are women, minority, LGBTQ+ and Indiana owned.
- 6B. Develop standardized guidelines/auditing check list to follow when selecting and contracting with any outside vendor.

