## Worksheet: Understanding Diversity

What is Diversity?

Diversity is defined as the condition of being diverse. It is the inclusion of diverse people of different races or cultures in a group or organization.

Related Terms and Concepts

When learning about diversity, it is important to understand terms and conceptual ideas.

* **Ableism.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors directed against people with disabilities
* **Ageism.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors directed against people because of their age
* **Anti-Semitism.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors directed against Jews
* **Anti-Arab discrimination.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors directed against Arabs
* **Classicism.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors based on differences in social class, generally directed against those from poorer and/or working-class backgrounds
* **Culture.** The ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and it were a religion
* **Discrimination.** The same kind of belief systems and behaviors, both personal and institutional, directed against individuals or groups based on their gender, ethnic group, social class, language, or other perceived differences.
* **Ethnocentrism**. Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors based on ethnic differences
* **Heterosexism.** Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors directed against gay men, lesbians, or transgender individuals.
* **Immigrants**. Those who have chosen freely to emigrate to another society
* **Multiculturalism**. The acceptance of multiple ethnic cultures, for practical reasons and/or for the sake of diversity and applied to the demographic make-up of a specific place
* **Racism**. A system of privilege and penalty based on one's race
* **Sexism**. Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors based on person’s sex or gender.

A Brief History

Since the 1960’s, the United States has led the way toward making ethnic and racial diversity an affirmative social ideal. America has pursued this goal since the 1960's, both to remedy past discrimination against minorities -- and to increase diversity for its own sake.

A Legal Overview

Several pivotal federal laws United States laws have been enacted to prohibit job discrimination.

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| **Law** | **Year** | **Purpose** |
| **Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (Title VII)** | 1964 | Prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin |
| **Equal Pay Act (EPA)** | 1963 | Protects men and women who perform substantially equal work in the same establishment from sex-based wage discrimination |
| **Age Discrimination in Employment Act  (ADEA)** | 1967 | Protects individuals who are 40 years of age or older |
| **Sections 501 and 505 of the Rehabilitation Act** | 1973 | Prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities who work |
| **Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA)** | 1978 | prohibits any employee who has authority to take certain personnel actions from discriminating for or against employees or applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability. It also provides that certain personnel actions cannot be based on attributes or conduct that do not adversely affect employee performance, such as marital status and political affiliation |
| **Title I and Title V of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** | 1990 | Prohibits employment discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in the private sector, and in state and local governments |
| **Civil Rights Act** | 1991 | Provides monetary damages in cases of intentional employment discrimination |

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has interpreted the prohibition of discrimination based on conduct to include discrimination based on sexual orientation. The CSRA also prohibits reprisal against federal employees or applicants for whistle-blowing, or for exercising an appeal, complaint, or grievance right. The CSRA is enforced by both the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) and the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB).

The EEOC

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is an independent federal agency created by Congress in 1964 to enforce Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It is composed of five Commissioners and a General Counsel appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Commissioners are appointed for five-year staggered terms; the General Counsel's term is four years. The President designates a Chair and a Vice-Chair. The Chair is the chief executive officer of the Commission. The Commission has authority to establish equal employment policy and to approve litigation. The General Counsel is responsible for conducting litigation. The EEOC carries out its enforcement, education and technical assistance activities through 50 field offices serving every part of the nation.