

LEADERSHIP IN DEI

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategies are key to building caring and safe workplaces. Jennifer Taylor-Oland, Medavie's director, diversity, equity & inclusion, shares the organization's DEI journey and considerations for designing inclusive benefits solutions.



How is DEI helping to shape healthier workplaces?

At Medavie, diversity + equity + inclusion = belonging. Creating this sense of belonging in an environment employees can trust is essential to fostering psychologically safe workplaces.

What does psychological safety really mean? It's about being in an environment where you feel like you have a voice and where you're able to share your perspectives and feel respected. It's also about seeing yourself reflected within your work environment—an environment that listens to employees and acts accordingly. It's about allowing room for mistakes and learning how we can do better. It's also about knowing your employees, as well as their diverse backgrounds and needs.

How is Medavie advancing DEI in its workplace?

We started our DEI journey by assessing our business and taking the pulse of employees to understand whether they feel as though they belong and whether or not we're seen as an inclusive organization. This employee perspective was then funnelled into a two-year DEI strategy. First and foremost, we established a DEI Council to support

the advancement of our strategy, built an inclusive language style guide and provided training and other resources to employees. We also assessed our talent journey to determine how we're attracting diverse talent and promoting it from within to ensure we're being thoroughly inclusive. We've trained all our leaders in inclusive leadership, unconscious bias and the competencies that come along with DEI. This year, we'll be launching employee resource groups, too.

Employees are responding positively to our efforts—and according to our most recent pulse survey, 93 per cent feel strongly that Medavie is committed to inclusion.

As a health insurer, and when looking specifically at benefits, what are some of the considerations that come with designing inclusive products and solutions?

As a health solutions partner, we focus on benefits solutions that reflect the diversity of the people we serve. As we move into the second phase of our DEI strategy, we're thinking about how to build upon this foundation.

One of the major considerations is consulting individuals with lived experience. When we developed our gender affirmation benefit, it was important for us to work with plan members who had transitioned or who were transitioning to better

understand their barriers to care. As a result, we designed a benefit that supports them from both a financial and mental-health perspective.

Our inclusive language project was also a major initiative. In analyzing our forms and client correspondence, we realized we were using gender and sex interchangeably and asking for gender specifications on forms where we didn't need to. From a risk-focused perspective, insurers don't need to know someone's gender—only their assigned sex at birth. We updated all forms and correspondence to have inclusive language, with an undisclosed option for plan members who are uncomfortable sharing their sex. We updated back-end legacy systems to be inclusive, as well.

Our DEI Council's agendas have a business-focused section that includes reviewing new offerings from a DEI perspective. This has been critical for us in building products and services that address diverse member needs. We want to hear from people with a wide range of backgrounds and we're applying this approach when looking at other benefit offerings for fertility, women's health and more.

As an organization, we're proud of our DEI journey and are committed to continuing to learn, grow and evolve.