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To: All MSU Extension Staff

From: Jeffrey W. Dwyer, PhD
Director, MSU Extension

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Re: MSU Extension Equal Opportunity in Programs and Employment

MSU Extension is committed to equal opportunity in both its programs and its employment. The equal opportunity statement on MSU Extension's letterhead and other publications, and the "And Justice For All" poster displayed in MSU Extension public service areas and at all programs, notifies the public that MSU Extension is open to all. I want to reinforce the importance of this commitment to civil rights and equal opportunity as a fundamental principle at the core of our organization.

MSU Extension as an organization, and each of us as employees, has an obligation to abide by federal and state laws, as well as the anti-discrimination policies of Michigan State University, in making our programs and employment open as affirmed in our public notification statements. In other words, MSU Extension cannot exclude current employees, job applicants, or anyone interested in participating in Extension programs on the basis of protected characteristics, including race, gender, disabilities, socioeconomic class and religion.



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Most of you have participated in the required two-day Multicultural Self Awareness Workshop. One of the items of focus in the workshop is the development of an affirmative perspective relative to persons of difference—understanding, appreciating, accepting, valuing and celebrating differences as assets for our communities and our organization. While MSU Extension does not have a legal obligation to carry out our multicultural diversity program, the concepts involved appropriately complement and help to support and realize many of our civil rights responsibilities. We see this as a blended responsibility.

What does "open to all" mean? It means that none of the protected characteristics can be used to exclude people from program participation and/or employment. Further, MSU Extension and its employees are expected to make good faith efforts to encourage participation of diverse populations in extension programs and employment. Indeed, an important guideline is for participants in MSU Extension programs to reflect the populations we serve and, as much as possible, in our staff that facilitate our programs.

For example, in programs held locally, the demographic data and participation data should be regularly reviewed to determine how effective Extension programs are in serving the diverse needs and interests of the community and offer programs that are designed to enhance outreach to be inclusive of the communities' diverse populations. In addition, good faith efforts are made for the Extension workforce to reflect the diverse populations within the relevant labor market from which we recruit applicants for employment.

Assuring equal opportunity is important throughout the year, but two times during the year deserve special attention: 1) when Institute Directors, District Coordinators and/or other MSU Extension administrators review Extension civil rights responsibilities and obligations with their respective staffs; and 2) when institute work groups and individuals are developing and executing their plans of work. I encourage you to take these processes seriously.

I encourage staff to review all of the MSU Extension Civil Rights materials, especially when the work group or individual plans of work are being developed each year. You may access these materials on the MSU Extension Civil Rights site at:

http://od.msue.msu.edu/civil_rights_diversity_multiculturalism/.

Each of us must understand our responsibilities to assure equal opportunity and implement programs and employment practices that are consistent with federal and state laws. Equally important is recognition and application of the diversity principles which reflect closely held values of Michigan State University and MSU Extension. It is through the cooperative efforts of all MSU Extension employees that MSU Extension will move forward in building and sustaining a diverse and inclusive Extension community.

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments.

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