

VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES

As part of the statewide training assessment, the OCWTP wanted to ensure that its training prepares workers to work with today's clients and their issues in a culturally competent manner. Toward that end, this portion of the assessment provides data on the knowledge and skills needed by workers and supervisors to effectively provide responsive services to diverse children and their families.

Data was collected through focus groups with supervisors, caseworkers, case aides, childcare workers, regional training center (RTC) staff, and trainers. Phone interviews were conducted with 23 executive directors or their designees. A literature review on culture and diversity was also conducted to inform the assessment process. (See Section II, *Methodology*, for more information.)

Sampled populations were asked a range of questions regarding culture, including whether participants were able to discern cultural issues from other types of issues, what are the gaps in knowledge and skills related to culture, and which cultural groups participants needed additional information about.

Defining Culture

One of the goals of the OCWTP and the child welfare system as a whole is to help child welfare staff become culturally competent. Cultural competence can be defined as “the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes” (Davis and Donald, 1997). In order to help, and not harm, families, child welfare workers need to be culturally competent.

One of the most prominent dilemmas in establishing cultural competence is that many child welfare professionals equate culture solely with race, ethnicity, or nationality. They fail to understand culture as a system, composed of values, beliefs, attitudes, traditions, and standards of behavior that organize people into social groups. Unlike race, ethnicity, or nationality, culture is adaptive; it is created by groups of people to ensure their survival and well-being.¹

¹ This is the definition of culture from the OCWTP *Culture and Diversity* curriculum.

THE STATEWIDE TRAINING ASSESSMENT
VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES

Culture includes:

- Cognitive systems such as beliefs and values;
- Norms or rules regarding appropriate behaviors; sometimes called codes of conduct;
- Roles, or the expected behaviors of people depending on their gender, age, social position, etc.;
- Spiritual or religious institutions;
- Economic systems regulating how resources are shared among members;
- Political systems with identified leaders and rules to maintain social order;
- Language, for communication among members; and
- Life products such as art, food, and dance, produced by the group.²

The OCWTP's definition of culture is similar to many definitions used by others in the field. For example, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Board of Directors (2001) adopted the following definition of culture:

Culture is the "integrated pattern of human behaviors that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group."

Understanding another's culture is made more difficult because it is often invisible. Strongly held beliefs and codes of conduct are not readily apparent to observers. This makes the task of becoming culturally competent a difficult one. Caseworkers can observe race and poverty, and can hear foreign languages and accents, but they cannot see most of a family's values, attitudes, and beliefs, referred to as the subjective elements of culture (Stewart and Bennett, 1991). If caseworkers are unfamiliar with a culture and do not have access to necessary cultural resources, they can fail in their efforts to help a family.

The Child Welfare League of America (2002) defines cultural competence as:

"the ability of individual and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and faiths or religions in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, tribes, and communities, and protects the dignity of each."

² Adapted from the work of Hammond, 1971.

THE STATEWIDE TRAINING ASSESSMENT
VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES

The Board of Directors of the National Association of Social Workers approved Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice in June 2001. The 10 standards are listed below:

Standard 1: **Ethics and Values**—Social workers shall function in accordance with the values, ethics, and standards of the profession, recognizing how personal and professional values may conflict with or accommodate the needs of diverse clients.

Standard 2: **Self-Awareness**—Social workers shall seek to develop an understanding of their own personal, cultural values and beliefs as one way of appreciating the importance of multicultural identities in the lives of people.

Standard 3: **Cross-Cultural Knowledge**—Social workers shall have and continue to develop specialized knowledge and understanding about the history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions of major client groups they serve.

Standard 4: **Cross-Cultural Skills**—Social workers shall use appropriate methodological approaches, skills, and techniques that reflect the workers' understanding of the role of culture in the helping process.

Standard 5: **Service Delivery**—Social workers shall be knowledgeable about and skillful in the use of services available in the community and broader society and be able to make appropriate referrals for their diverse clients.

Standard 6: **Empowerment and Advocacy**—Social workers shall be aware of the effect of social policies and programs on diverse client populations, advocating for and with clients whenever appropriate.

Standard 7: **Diverse Workforce**—Social workers shall support and advocate for recruitment, admissions and hiring, and retention efforts in social work programs and agencies that ensure diversity within the profession.

Standard 8: **Professional Education**—Social workers shall advocate for and participate in educational and training programs that help advance cultural competence within the profession.

Standard 9: **Language Diversity**—Social workers shall seek to provide or advocate for the provision of information, referrals, and services in the language appropriate to the client, which may include use of interpreters.

Standard 10: **Cross-Cultural Leadership**—Social workers shall be able to communicate information about diverse client groups to other professionals.

**THE STATEWIDE TRAINING ASSESSMENT
VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES**

“The goals of these standards are to improve the quality of culturally competent services provided by social workers; to establish professional expectations so social workers can monitor and evaluate their own culturally competent practice; to provide a framework for social workers to assess culturally competent practice; to inform stakeholders about the profession’s standards for culturally competent practice; to establish specific ethical guidelines for culturally competent social work practice; and to provide documentation of professional expectations for child welfare agencies and other stakeholders” (NASW, 2001).

FINDINGS:

Workers’ Understanding of Culture and Diversity

Unfortunately, during focus groups, when sampled populations were asked what problems they faced related to culture, many responses indicated a lack of understanding or confusion about culture. For example, substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, poverty, juvenile sex offenders, mental illness, and children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) were some of the reported “cultures” about which workers wanted additional information. Caseworkers, case aides, and residential child care workers also requested information about “generational” differences, gays and lesbians, and people who are deaf. These focus group responses illustrate the confusion child welfare staff had in defining culture versus other types of personal or social differences.

Many workers also reported needing more information about the “Hispanic” culture. This, too, suggests worker confusion about the meaning of culture. The term “Hispanic” refers to people who are Spanish speaking, which includes many diverse groups of people such as Mexican, Cuban, Columbian, Puerto Rican, and Venezuelan. It appears some workers do not know the ethnicity nor recognize cultural differences among Hispanic populations with whom they work.

Some caseworkers and case aides who participated in focus groups requested additional training on the “African American” culture, showing the same definitional confusion about culture, suggesting workers are not differentiating race from culture.

Many counties reported difficulties in working with families from diverse religious backgrounds. Caseworkers discussed clients whose religious views prohibit medical attention for their children. Other caseworkers reported working with “pagan” families involved in “devil worship,” and fundamentalist families who thought their pregnant teenager was “possessed by the devil.” One worker reported struggling to work with clients whose religion promoted “severe physical discipline” of children. Religious affiliation was also mistaken for culture by child welfare workers.

DISCUSSION:

Focus group participants showed wide discrepancies in the degree to which they understood the meaning of culture versus race, ethnicity, nationality, etc. The OCWTP standardized curriculum on culture and diversity was designed to help participants develop awareness of their own culture and to differentiate cultural differences from other group differences.

In a review of Train Track, the statewide database on OCWTP training records, the standardized Culture and Diversity workshop was only offered 18 times in the past four years. In the last two years, the workshop has been offered four times. Given staff turnover rates in many counties, it is probable that most staff have never attended the OCWTP standardized workshop on culture and diversity.

Other diversity-related workshops are also offered around the state through the eight RTCs. In a Train Track review of other workshops offered in the last five years, the following content list was generated:

- Working with Asian Populations
- Multiracial Families and Children
- Valuing Diversity
- Model of Oppression
- Gay/Lesbian Youth
- Working with African American Families
- Appalachian Clients
- Amish and the Child Welfare System
- Hispanic/Latino Culture
- Families from Southeastern Asia
- Understanding Religious Diversity
- Power, Gender, and Identity
- Mothers Raising Sons
- Fathering in the 90s

As can be seen, there are many different content workshops offered through the OCWTP that are related to culture. These workshops all have value to caseworkers in their efforts to understand the families with whom they work. However, if workers enroll in the listed workshops, without first attending an overview of culture and diversity training, continued confusion about the meaning

THE STATEWIDE TRAINING ASSESSMENT
VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES

of culture versus race and other differences will occur. The proper sequencing of culture and diversity workshops is as important as any other area of casework practice preparations and ongoing training.

Many workers were also confused about culture versus client problems. This is understandable if caseworkers do not have training and guidance in working with families who are different from their own. The OCWTP curriculum on culture and diversity helps participants understand that clients are not the same as their problems, and clients' "problems" are not their culture. By understanding the ways in which all people engage in stereotyping and ethnocentrism, workers come to see how their own views can negatively impact their practice. Even though staff confused client problems, such as drug abuse and juvenile sex offending, with culture, their comments still reflect a training need in these areas of practice. Please see Section V, *Client Characteristics*, for additional information.

Self-Awareness and Dealing with Racism and Bias in Others

NASW's first standard requires caseworkers to examine their own backgrounds and identities in order to recognize and acknowledge their personal assumptions, values, and biases. It appears from focus group discussions that many caseworkers are competent in this regard.

Caseworkers discussed the need to recognize their own values and beliefs and the need to be open-minded when working with clients. The following comments illustrate this:

- Workers described their need to be nonjudgmental in working with poor families. Many were aware of their own "middle class standards."
- Workers described ethnocentrism in service providers, prosecutors, and courts, who were not aware of how their own beliefs and values impacted cases. Workers reported how clients had been misunderstood because of cultural differences. "We need to help teachers and the courts understand their cultural biases and determine when children are really at risk."
- "We are not afraid to ask the client about their culture."
- "We have to find similarities with others so they feel comfortable with us. If you show an interest, they will share their culture."
- "Respect others."
- "We have the ability to engage families with less judgment, more sensitivity."

THE STATEWIDE TRAINING ASSESSMENT
VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES

Residential child care workers expressed a desire to help children in placement by finding ways to incorporate different cultural practices into the residential setting and also expressed a need for training in how to provide personal care for children of different races.

But caseworkers also talked about workers who still applied their own standards and beliefs about families to those on their caseloads. Below are some comments illustrating this lack of self-awareness:

- “Workers judge families by their own values.”
- “Case assignments are distributed by race rather than strengths [of the worker].”
- “Clients and workers have a different code of ethics.”

African American caseworkers in some counties reported problems with some professionals in the white community. One worker from a medium sized county reported the school principal “visibly wipes his hand off after he shakes my hand.” Some workers reported having problems coping with racist clients.

Some Cuyahoga County caseworkers reported that some Caucasian coworkers remove African American and Hispanic children from their homes more quickly than they remove other children.

Case aides brought up an additional issue that may be related to self-awareness and bias, although that can't be said with certainty. Many case aides reported feeling disrespected by caseworkers and other agency personnel. Case aides consistently reported that their knowledge and opinions are not respected by caseworkers with whom they work. Case aides expressed a desire to be seen as a member of the team, and to be appreciated for the knowledge they have as a result of working closely with a family.

Workers from a large sized central county wanted training for Guardians Ad Litem (GALs). A number of workers expressed dissatisfaction with GALs whom they view as prejudiced. Workers want GALs to understand their own cultural biases and how those biases impact the families and children with whom they work.

DISCUSSION:

Many workers who participated in focus groups clearly understood how their own backgrounds and experiences could impact child welfare practice. Workers' comments show that they understand the importance of self-awareness in becoming culturally competent.

THE STATEWIDE TRAINING ASSESSMENT
VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES

This was clearly not true for all workers. Some participant comments were highly troubling in that they reported bias and prejudice by professional staff, not only toward families, but also toward coworkers and other child welfare professionals.

As stated earlier, the OCWTP offers a wide range of workshops on culture and diversity. The standardized OCWTP workshop on culture and diversity provides participants with information about communication styles and working with people from different backgrounds and experiences. Time is spent helping supervisors and caseworkers understand their own values, beliefs, and codes of conduct, and how these impact clients.

It was not possible to determine whether workers who participated in focus groups and communicated a lack of understanding about culture were the specific ones who had or had not attended any OCWTP workshops on culture and diversity, given the confidential nature of focus group responses.

Of course, attending one workshop on this subject is not enough to enable workers to transfer knowledge and skill back to the job. Cultural competence is a sophisticated skill, requiring experience and practice before skill mastery is accomplished. However, it is clear from this assessment that many workers need additional assistance in working competently with clients, coworkers, and their communities.

Locating Culturally Appropriate Service Resources

Many agency child welfare workers seemed to understand the importance of cultural competence in providing effective casework services. In addition to OCWTP training on culture, many supervisors and caseworkers reported seeking out cultural information to help them work successfully with diverse families and children. For instance, caseworkers reported accessing the Internet and libraries to obtain information that would help them understand client families. Other workers reported talking with coworkers who were experienced at working with certain cultures, or were themselves from a particular ethnic, racial, or religious background. Some workers took college courses to aid them in working with families.

Workers also reported appreciation for diversity in their workplace. They expressed appreciation for staff members who came from different cultures and saw them as assets to their agencies. Some workers suggested their agencies hire additional workers from different backgrounds and cultures because those workers brought a needed knowledge base to other staff.

Some workers, mostly in metro counties, reported having access to interpreters, many of whom they valued for more than translation services. Interpreters

THE STATEWIDE TRAINING ASSESSMENT
VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES

reportedly often helped agency staff by providing cultural information about clients, promoting an accurate interpretation of behaviors and attitudes.

Some workers, however, reported that the interpreters with whom they worked were not helpful, citing inaccurate translation, lack of knowledge about a family's culture, and fear that the workers, themselves, were not being translated accurately. Some interpreters refused to go to a client's home and would only translate by telephone.

Workers from a large sized northeast county need access to social work tools in Spanish languages. This county reported that 7% of their county is Hispanic but only one worker per unit speaks Spanish. Given the focus on family-centered practice, caseworkers should have access to materials in the written language of the families with whom they work.

DISCUSSION:

In reviewing participants' comments on culture, it appears most caseworkers and supervisors appreciate the need to have information about other cultures and cultural resources in working with diverse families. Most workers also stressed the importance of knowing about one's own biases and codes of behavior in order to provide culturally competent services.

Many workers also know how to find information on culture and diversity. Workers showed motivation in their varied approaches to obtaining needed cultural information.

To work effectively within a community context, however, workers must gain access to the local community. This is more difficult in immigrant communities. It may also be a problem in close-knit communities where people adhere to certain cultural norms and values, even though they may have lived in the United States for generations.

It was less clear from the data collected whether or not most caseworkers and other staff know how to effectively and appropriately access a local community to build agency cultural competence. Some of the knowledge and skills supervisors and workers need in order to work with a diverse community include the following:

- how to identify community leaders
- how to establish rapport, and develop trust between the agency and the community
- how to identify community members who can educate staff about the community and its needs

THE STATEWIDE TRAINING ASSESSMENT
VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES

- how to identify and create a network of culturally responsive service providers
- how to provide advocacy on behalf of clients

Racial and Ethnic Group Issues

Workers also reported an increase in certain racial and ethnic populations. For instance, workers in a small sized southwest county reported increases in Mexican families, juvenile Mexicans without families, and migrant workers who live with their children in substandard housing. Workers also described “Hispanic” families with domestic violence and truancy problems. Workers expressed the need for assistance in working with families on these issues, especially in collaboration with schools.

Lucas County caseworkers reported a disproportionate number of African Americans on their caseloads. They reported that many African American clients are poor, are recipients of multiple services, are under more scrutiny as a result, and that more of their children are going into placement. Competence in working with African American families was perceived as being a necessary ingredient to successful intervention in families in which maltreatment was an issue.

Working with Immigrant Families

Many executive directors/designees and county staff reported an increase in immigrant families in their counties. Metro counties indicated the greatest increases, but a number of small, medium, and large counties also reported increases. For example, Summit County caseworkers reported a need for training in investigating alleged maltreatment in Russian Jewish, Slavic, Korean, and Islamic families. Supervisors in northeast and northwest counties reported an increase in Arabic/Palestinian populations. ODJFS technical assistance managers reported increases in Latino, Muslim, Somalian, and Asian families. (See Section V, *Client Characteristics*, for additional information about reported increases in immigrant populations.)

Several regional training center staff want workers who conduct home studies to have training on specific ethnic and immigrant populations.

DISCUSSION:

Many immigrant families do not speak English, nor are they always familiar with American norms and values. Child welfare professionals need accurate

THE STATEWIDE TRAINING ASSESSMENT
VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES

information about these groups. Topic areas about each group would include, at a minimum, the following for specific ethnic/racial groups:

- codes of interpersonal behavior
- values about public service systems
- prevalent values, traits, and meanings of behaviors and conduct
- stresses faced by families
- child rearing beliefs and practices
- roles or expected behaviors based on gender, age, and other factors
- religious institutions and beliefs

Language and Communication

Workers reported considerable difficulty in working with families who do not speak English. In these cases, agencies often depend upon interpreters who, according to workers, often help staff understand not only the family's language, but cultural factors as well. As discussed earlier in this section, a number of focus group participants also experienced problems in working with interpreters including: interpreters who would not meet in person with families, but did their translation only by phone; interpreters whom they suspected were not translating either the workers' or the families' comments accurately; and interpreters who were not familiar with a particular family's cultural norms. Residential workers described this difficulty with particular frustration, as did caseworkers.³

Appalachian Families

According to the Ohio State University Extension Office (2002), an Appalachian person is anyone born in the federally designated Appalachian region of the United States, or anyone whose ancestors were born there. Ohio is one of a few states that has a significant population of Appalachian people, mostly residing in the south and southeastern regions. In addition, many counties across Ohio have Appalachian residents who migrated north, mostly to secure employment.

A medium sized western county reported Appalachian clients as the most prevalent population on their caseloads. According to caseworkers, Appalachians who reside in a single town in their county are mainly poor, live in poorly maintained rental housing, have little access to transportation or doctors, have

³ Some residential childcare workers and caseworkers also reported communication difficulties in working with clients who are hearing impaired. Although they did not define the specific problem as one of working with sign language interpreters, one can surmise that many of the same communication difficulties would arise in working with people who are deaf as occur with clients who do not speak English.

THE STATEWIDE TRAINING ASSESSMENT
VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES

poor reading skills, and many adults have been sanctioned off of cash assistance. This county noted that training offered by their RTC on Appalachian culture was extremely helpful in understanding this population in their county.

A medium sized east central county also indicated that Appalachian families are their primary caseload, and are also living in poverty. They have expressed a need for culture and diversity training to help them address the needs of these clients.

Some caseworkers also reported coworkers in their agencies who did not value or understand Appalachian cultures. Rural southeast Ohio, extending upward into Franklin County, is home to many Appalachian families and these families are represented on county agency caseloads.

The RTCs also identified a need for worker training on Appalachian families.

DISCUSSION:

Workers need access to competent interpreters. But determining who is proficient requires an understanding of the potential roles and benefits interpreters could offer to the child welfare field. Interpreters could and should be seen as resources who can offer more than just language translation. For this reason, child welfare agencies should have access to interpreters who are familiar with the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background of the family, and who understand the purpose of child welfare services and the field's use of terminology and its methods. Interpreters must be able to establish rapport with adults and children, and understand subtle nonverbal forms of communication and issues related to confidentiality. Interpreters must also understand their collaborative role in working with the caseworker and the agency.

According to Fradd and Wilen (1990), interpreters translate orally, while a translator works with written documents. Furthermore, interpreters should be neutral, and not members of the client's family. Interpreters who work with hearing impaired clients should be Registered Qualified Sign Language Interpreters (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2000).

Multicultural Families

Workers also reported a need for help in working with multicultural birth, foster, and adoptive families, and particularly families who are fostering or have adopted children of another race. Workers reported that adoptive families are often not aware of how to blend elements of the child's or children's culture with their own. Workers reported that adoptive parents often need help in providing personal

THE STATEWIDE TRAINING ASSESSMENT
VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES

care for children of different races, especially in how to provide hair care. (Residential child care workers also expressed this need.)

Many workers identified needing training in helping families deal with intrafamilial cultural issues. They identified a variety of types of multicultural families, including the following:

- cross-cultural or transracial marriages and other adult relationships
- biracial or bicultural children
- children who are in placement with families of different cultural backgrounds
- transracial adoption, kinship, and foster care

DISCUSSION:

Many workers need help in recognizing conflict within families that is generated by cultural differences among the members themselves. Once these are recognized, workers will also need knowledge and skills on how to intervene. Cultural differences can cause anger and additional stress in families, interfering with children's development of a positive identity and cultural affiliation. Workers should be able to access cultural training and cross-cultural counseling resources in order to help families overcome these barriers successfully without allowing a placement or adoption to disrupt.

Poverty and Socioeconomic Status

As indicated earlier in this section, many supervisors and caseworkers asked for additional training on working with families who are poor. Some requested more information about the "culture of poverty." Workers also expressed concern about the inability of staff, who are often from the middle class, to fully understand the needs and life circumstances of their clients, who are often poor or working class. (Also see Section V, *Client Characteristics*.) ODJFS technical assistance managers also reported a need for worker training in issues related to social class. They indicated that they are not sure workers understand the pressures and barriers associated with poverty, particularly as experienced by single mothers who are struggling to work and take care of children.

DISCUSSION:

Sometimes social workers, and others, refer to the "culture of poverty." The term "culture," in this context, is used loosely. It is true that people who live in chronic poverty make certain life adaptations which contribute to commonalities in

THE STATEWIDE TRAINING ASSESSMENT
VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES

values, attitudes, beliefs, and codes of conduct which may be common among them and very different from those of the larger society. However, people who are poor do not constitute a culture. In fact, people from different cultural groups may respond very differently to comparable economic circumstances.

The underlying training need could be rephrased as working with families whose stressful economic circumstances contribute to and exacerbate a wide variety of chronic and often intractable problems, including child maltreatment. As stated earlier in this section, workers reported struggling to help families who have a number of significant problems in addition to child maltreatment.

Workers also need training in how socioeconomic status and classism affect people to help them understand how their own class background may affect their social work practice, including increasing the likelihood that they will make inappropriate judgments about families.

Multigenerational Families

Caseworkers also reported an increase in families on their caseloads where members of multiple generations resided in the same household. They speculated that teen pregnancies, stressful economic circumstances, and welfare reform laws requiring minor parents to live with a supervising adult might have contributed to the increase.

There is also an increased number of grandparents who are raising grandchildren and workers reported problems in working with these families. Age-related differences can make living in the same home stressful. Caseworkers and case aides who work with multigenerational families expressed a need for effective strategies in helping families cope with these differences.

Another change reported by workers is the increase in immigrant parents with American-born children. Workers speculated that intergenerational conflicts threaten the stability of some families on their caseloads.

Multigenerational Staff

Supervisors from a medium sized east central county wanted additional information on how to work with the “younger generation.” Workers and supervisors from several counties noted that as “Generation X” members enter the child welfare work force, differing values and codes of conduct have emerged.

DISCUSSION:

Another section of this report: Section IV, *Work Force Characteristics*, provides additional information on multigenerational staff issues.

Characteristics of Other Differences

Workers identified a variety of training needs in areas related to personal and social differences. Topics that came up frequently include the following:

- sexual preference, including gay and lesbian clients; gay and lesbians who adopt or foster; and gay and lesbian youth in residential care
- religion, including religious codes that promote withholding of medical treatment when this practice may constitute neglect; excessive discipline; extramarital sex and pregnancy, and other behaviors in conflict with strongly held religious beliefs. Workers specifically requested information about Amish/Mennonite families, many of whom live in northeastern Ohio.
- disabilities, including working with family members who have mental retardation, and/or mental illnesses, and working with people who have physical disabilities, including hearing impairments

**DECISIONS OF THE OCWTP STEERING COMMITTEE
REGARDING CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE
SERVICES**

Cultural competence is a core value of the field of social work and the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program.

1. **The OCWTP will clearly communicate the importance of county public children services staff attending training on the foundational issues regarding culture and diversity prior to attending workshops on specific cultures or diversity issues. Foundational concepts will be trained at the Core level and workshops on specific culture and diversity issues will be developed and trained. The OCWTP will develop strategies for increasing participation in culture and diversity workshops and other learning activities.** (This decision is also supported by assessment findings presented in Section V, *Client Characteristics*.)

There was considerable evidence in this assessment process of a continuing lack of cultural awareness and knowledge among child welfare and other professionals. Some workers reported that other service providers and their own coworkers lacked an understanding of culture and how it impacts people's values, beliefs, and behaviors, and reported needing training in strategies to deal with other professionals who exhibit bias and prejudice. Some study respondents themselves were unable to accurately define or identify cultural issues. The standardized OCWTP culture and diversity curriculum was designed to develop accurate cultural knowledge, self-awareness, and interpersonal communication skills that promote relationship development and sound cross-cultural communication. Yet, this training workshop has historically been infrequently offered and poorly attended, in spite of high evaluation scores and very positive comments by persons who have attended. The OCWTP has, for several years, debated whether to add culture and diversity training to Core. The primary deterrent was OCWTP's concern about the field's response to adding days to Core training, not about adding content on culture. This dialogue is to be reopened as part of the OCWTP's current Core revisions.

2. **The OCWTP will collect additional information about significant populations of "new arrivals," by RTC region, and identify resources available to assist RTC coordinators in responding to staff training needs when working with specific client populations.** (This decision is also supported by assessment findings presented in Section IV, *Workforce*)

THE STATEWIDE TRAINING ASSESSMENT
VI. CULTURE AND DIVERSITY: PROVIDING RESPONSIVE SERVICES

Characteristics, Section V, Client Characteristics, and Section VII, Training Content.)

Training on specific ethnicities, races, and religions helps workers understand the range of potential beliefs, values, attitudes, and codes of conduct that define the families on their caseloads and impact casework practice. Together with information about other cultural features of the family, workers would be better equipped to work with diverse families and children.