Key Concepts in Culture and Diversity

*Caseworkers:* Have you ever caught yourself making assumptions about a person… based on his or her “demographic information,” or on how he or she looks, sounds, or acts? Has anyone ever made such assumptions about *you*? It’s both easy and human to make such assumptions, but it can be discrediting at best--and disastrous at worst--for child welfare professionals working with families.

In contrast, proactively learning about and honoring a client’s *culture* and overall *diversity* can make all the difference when serving families. Understanding these concepts is the first step.

**What is Key Concepts in Culture and Diversity?**

It’s an interactive, short (30 – 60 minute) online course that lays out basic concepts around culture and diversity and how these relate to sound child welfare practice. A foundational piece for child welfare professionals, it helps workers:

- Understand basic concepts around culture and diversity, how the two interrelate, and the role that race, ethnicity, and other key factors can play in a person’s identity and perspectives.
- Learn the concept and significance of “collective membership” (i.e., the fact that most people are members of not just one affiliate group, but many.)
- Understand the relevance of learning about their own and their clients’ diversity as a prerequisite to effective casework.

**Who is the intended audience?**

This course is intended for caseworkers and for supervisors wishing to support their staff.

**Is credit offered for this course?**

This course is currently not available for training credit.
**How this course is structured:**

During this course learners are asked to:

- View the animated presentation on the components of “diversity” and the role culture plays as just one of those components.
- Review case scenarios whose outcomes reflect both competent and incompetent responses to a client’s diversity.
- Identify some of the affiliate groups they consider themselves members of.
- Consider the sources in their lives (experiences, groups/individuals, events) that have most shaped their values and belief systems.

**How this course is beneficial:**

*For the agency*

Each time a caseworker acts or fails to act out of ignorance about diversity issues, an agency risks losing time, resources, and credibility—not to mention facing liability issues. This course is a first step in understanding culture and diversity, and the role it plays in effective casework.

*For children and families*

A family suffers when a worker defaults to her own preconceptions about that family, leading to barriers to effective casework. On the flip side, a family is best served when a caseworker is conscious about the importance of honoring client diversity.

**How this course can be used in your agency:**

Supervisors can assign *Key Concepts of Culture and Diversity* to individuals for conferences or units for group meetings, and facilitate discussion on their own or with the help of a coach. Alternately, they can ask a coach to facilitate the discussion and participate right along with their worker(s).
Minimum System/Equipment Requirements:
Users will need:

- Access to a **computer with internet connectivity**, Adobe Reader software installed (to enable opening the PDF attachments), and a **sound card**.
- **Headphones** (suggested) to keep others from being distracted.

Tips for success:
- Workers should know that their supervisors value worker participation in this learning activity, and that their supervisors have first taken and processed the course for themselves.
- Supervisors should also be proactive in applying recommended **Transfer of Learning Strategies** to help ensure their workers’ success.

What workers and supervisors say about this course:

**About the content:**

- “I think this is valuable for new staff as an introduction.”
- “It’s a good refresher of solid information.”
- “I liked the case examples and how it wasn’t all about race—it was so inclusive and nonjudgmental.”
- “It helped me refocus on the need to listen before acting or coming to my own conclusions.”

**About the format:**

- “It was simple to do, on my time and at my desk.”
- “It was convenient, short, and to-the-point.”
- “The visuals were good and I liked the case stories.”

--Participants from the course pilot
To learn more about participants’ reaction to the pilot course, go toEvaluation Findings for Key Concepts in C & D

**How to access:**
This is a self-directed course; you do not need to go through the RTC. To access, go directly to **KEY CONCEPTS IN CULTURE AND DIVERSITY**.

For questions, contact your RTC.