Self-Awareness: An Important First Step toward Diversity Competence

Transcending Differences Toolkit-Module2

Facilitation Guide for Supervisors

Self-Awareness: An Important First Step toward Diversity Competence is a computer-based, interactive short course (30 to 60 minutes). It explores and contrasts family-related values, beliefs, and practices. It considers the potential for inappropriate assessments and interventions when we encounter family patterns and practices different from our own.

Learners will:

- Identify some of their own cultural values and assumptions
- Increase awareness of some family-related values, beliefs, and practices they were exposed to in their growing-up years
- Become aware of some contrasting values, beliefs, and practices they may encounter when working with families from diverse backgrounds and resulting potential dilemmas
- Become aware of the need for self-monitoring when assessing families whose patterns, beliefs and practices differ from their own
- Reflect on the unconscious influence the above factors may have on how caseworkers view and work with families whose values and practices differ from theirs

Competencies:

307-01-004: Understands how a worker’s background, values, beliefs, and traditions can influence their work with families and children
307-01-005: Understands how an ethnocentric perspective and lack of cultural knowledge can undermine a worker’s ability to serve clients from diverse backgrounds

Prerequisites:

There is no prerequisite, but it is strongly recommended that participants first take the foundational distance learning course, Key Concepts in Culture and Diversity—either independently or in a group activity.

Click on the following links to access:

- [Key Concepts in Culture and Diversity](#)
- [Facilitation Guide for Supervisors - Key Concepts in Culture and Diversity](#)
Facilitation Instructions

Supervisors have two options for presenting *Self-Awareness: An Important First Step toward Diversity Competence*. One way is to follow the guidelines below, stopping between slides for group discussion and exercises. The second way is to show the presentation in its entirety, then follow it with a group discussion, using the questions provided as prompts. It is recommended that the supervisor be very familiar with the learning activity before presenting it to his or her staff.

This is the online link to the learning activity, *Self-Awareness: An Important First Step toward Diversity Competence*

A. **Self-Awareness:**

1. Play this section in its entirety.

2. After you have listened to this section of the learning, ask:

   - How many saw the self-learning module called *Concepts on Diversity*?

   If the majority has **not** viewed it, assign it as a future individual or unit activity. In any case, proceed to the next step.

B. **Meet Lindsey:**

1. Introduce this section with the following statements:

   - In the field of diversity, it is generally accepted that before we can be respectful of and responsive to another’s diversity, we must first be tuned in to our own diversity, defined here as *the combination of traits, values, practices, experiences, and other influences from our background that contribute to making us uniquely who we are*.

   - Among those influences is a factor referred to in the *Key Concepts in Culture and Diversity* module as “collective membership.” Ask if anyone can explain the concept.

   **Collective membership** is the notion that our values, behaviors, and view of the world in general are shaped by what we have picked up from the different social groups with which we’ve been affiliated—*including, but not limited to, racial, cultural, or ethnic groups*. Other social groups could include our group of work colleagues; an interest group (political, religious, or otherwise); or a group with which we share a common trait or identity—be it physical, spiritual, ideological, experiential, or circumstantial.
2. View the slides in this section, and then proceed to the next section.

C. **About this Course:**

1. Explain that in the following slides, four caseworkers explore their own diversity. Play the slides in this section up through the self-descriptions of the four caseworkers.

2. After hearing the four self-descriptions, ask the following question:

   - Are there any general observations regarding the caseworkers’ ways of self-identifying?

     *If no one else mentions it, point out how each caseworker self-identified differently, emphasizing different aspects of him/herself [e.g., some self-defined by faith, others didn’t; some by sexual orientation, others didn’t; some in relation to their families, others didn’t, etc.]*

3. Invite members of the group to take turns self-identifying, similar to the way the caseworkers did (limit to one minute per description).

   Summarize briefly the “take-away” and application to diversity practice in casework.

   - **What people consider to be their primary affiliate groups—and what they value and draw from each group—will vary from person to person. Since most people are members of several affiliate groups, they will be exposed to a variety of values, beliefs, codes of conduct, and that the particular “blend” of those is therefore unique to each individual.**

   - **We therefore cannot assume that people who are members of the same affiliate group(s) will necessarily believe, act, or even self-identify in the same way or to the same degree.**

   - **We must approach each person and family with an open mind and open questions—allowing them to reveal who they are and what matters most to them.**

4. **Select Topic Exercise:**

   Begin this values-sharing exercise in the following way:

   1) Pair off the participants (If there is an odd number of participants, consider stepping in as the partner to the “odd man out” or, you can assign one group with three partners.)
2) Forward the program to the Select Topic slide.

3) Explain that each set of partners will be spending the next few minutes talking about their growing-up experiences in selected topic areas.

4) Divide the seven topics (or whatever number of topics you decide on) among the pairs.

5) Give each set of partners the handout which you can download and copy from the following link: Values Sharing Exercise.

   Explain that each set of partners will have five minutes per assigned topic area to discuss their responses to the questions.

6) To provide an example of how your participants might want to respond to the questions, choose one topic area on the screen and click on two of the on-the-screen colleagues to play their responses.

7) Announce that at the end of the allotted time period, partners should be prepared to share their responses and what each one learned from the other partner. Allow 5 – 10 minutes for large group sharing, where you invite responses with the following questions:

   ? Which partners observed big differences in each other’s topic area(s)? What insights were gained in the process of sharing?

   ? Which partners observed lots of overlap (with perhaps minor differences) in each other’s topic area(s)? What insights were gained in the process of sharing?

D. Reflection

1. View the Your Thoughts slide, then ask the following question:

   ? How might our values and experiences growing up unconsciously predispose us to judge other families whose values and lifestyles differ from ours?

   Point to cover: We all have the natural tendency to believe that our own values and beliefs are the standard against which to judge others (a tendency known as ethnocentrism). As caseworkers, we must be vigilant and avoid those tendencies. Self-
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Awareness is our first step toward addressing our biases.

2. View the Reflection of Others slide:

Allow the large group to hear how two of the caseworkers respond to that question—preferably the same two caseworkers whose growing-up experiences you already listened to earlier. Before playing the segments, ask the group to be ready to summarize how each of the caseworkers answered the question.

Debrief by asking participants to summarize key points from the two selected caseworkers and to share the insights they gained by listening. See summary points for each below:

- Daryl’s key point summarized:
  Don’t assume that parents who do not push their children to pursue every opportunity are bad parents or don’t care for their children.

- Beth Ann’s key point summarized:
  Don’t assume that just because people look, sound, or behave like members of a given group, that those people conform to every pattern of belief, practice, and/or behavior associated with that group.

- Stacey’s key points summarized:
  We should be aware that, unless we check our thinking, we can very easily “default” into thinking that how we were raised is the best way, and it becomes the standard by which we judge other families. For example:
  a. Don’t assume that a mother who does not conform to the image she holds of a “strong woman” is not suitable or parent.
  b. Don’t assume that parents who do not require their children to sit down to a family dinner (as her parents did) are necessarily “neglecting” their children, or failing to meet their children’s needs.

- CJ’s key point summarized:
  We can easily jump to conclusions about the meaning of any behavior because we defer to our own frame of reference, life experience etc. Instead, we should consider a range of possibilities before drawing conclusions. For example:
  a. Don’t assume that if a child does not take the initiative to seek opportunities to
better his or her situation (as in seeking a job, for example), that the reason is lack of motivation or “character.” It could be, for example, that he or she has not had guidance (as CJ had from his parents) on the notion and benefits of “taking the initiative.”

3. View the Your Thoughts and Next Steps slides. Afterward, turn off the screen and complete the group activity.

E. Final Activity:

1. Pass out post-it notes and have each person jot down the answer to the following question:

   \[ \text{How might my values and experiences growing up unconsciously predispose me to judge other families whose values and lifestyles differ from mine?} \]

2. After five minutes, ask participants to post their notes on a wall or white board. Invite volunteers to articulate what they have written, and then read the remaining notes (to preserve anonymity) for the rest to consider.

3. Close the exercise by sharing the anecdote of a seasoned caseworker, who received a great tip from a supervisor who asked her the following question in response to her descriptions of suspected abuse or neglect:

   \[ \text{“Hmmm . . . Is what you’re describing risk to the child, or are you describing a personal bias (i.e., your own culturally-driven or values-driven view of what you observed?)} \]

Mention that that caseworker has since learned to always ask herself the same question. \textit{Shouldn’t we monitor ourselves in the same way as well?} We can learn to monitor ourselves by:

1) Understanding that all of us see the world from different perspectives. Our differing perspectives are a result of our different cultures, life experiences, and personal attributes.

2) Developing self-awareness about those perspectives that can lead us to making unfair judgments of assessments of others.

3) Stopping ourselves from falling into the trap of ethnocentrism.
4) Asking ourselves: *Does what I’m describing pose a risk to the child, or am I describing a personal bias?*

Wrap up this session by encouraging participants to continue on their journey of self-awareness: a critical step toward addressing personal biases and maintaining a mindset for diversity-competence.

---THANK YOU---