UCEDD Directors Meeting
Roundtable Discussions
December 4, 2016

Topic: Improving diversity, inclusion, cultural & linguistic competence

Facilitator: Tanisha Clarke

Discussion notes:

- Have to consider current climate of the nation- questions from public on how to respond to bias/stereotypes in elementary school children, not being discussed in businesses
- This is a very big topic- lumping diversity, inclusion, and cultural linguistic competence
- In VI- children with disabilities are being placed in regular education classrooms- we talk about inclusion but we are preparing 2 different teachers (regular ed vs special ed teachers)- general ed teachers aren't welcoming children with disabilities; teachers are reporting spending too much of their time on the 2 included children, they don't have the training to work with children with special needs; are we doing enough to support inclusion?
- Inclusion can also address race, ethnicity, gender, SES, etc.
- Potential for increased exclusion that goes beyond disability; post-election there is a lot of anxiety in the schools about exclusion based on other factors (e.g., immigration status), so those things that haven't been addressed/fixed with individuals with disabilities are pushed into a larger context
- We are being challenged with anti-discrimination
- It's hard to push this movement forward when people have other fears, anxieties
- Goal- need to figure out ways to respond as we move forward
- Concerned that these important issues will be excluded from our future grant guidances and there will be less reinforcement for doing this; afraid this will be "white-washed" (emphasis provided by commenter); we need to remain committed to this even if the language/reinforcement is missing. (noted though, that these concepts are highlighted in the *legislation* so should remain)
- People don't promote that cultural competence is included in the DD Act- we are acting on the legislative mandate
- We should know what is in federal statute and stay consistent to that until/when/if it changes
- A setting can be diverse, inclusive, and culturally/linguistically competent but the challenge is poverty- what does/can our network do about this? These things are hard to impact until poverty is addressed; SES diversity must be included- how intentional are we in including those families in the work we do
- The current climate has made what is already a difficult topic even more difficult- as hatred and outspokenness about this is seen as acceptable; we were already walking on eggshells regarding diversity, etc. prior to this shift in underlying hatred has been given a voice in some way
- This culture has always been there, and the opportunity for these biases/prejudices/discriminatory actions to come into the community
- There are some things we can do- e.g., Washington Post article about teaching 10 yr olds in schools about what is a stereotype, etc.; there is more of a need for this now than ever

- The activist orientation has been activated in a number of individuals
- Emphasis within the organization- although the "acceptable" culture has changed, need to emphasize that this will not be tolerated
- There are concrete things you can do when you are faced with these comments- preparing/practicing what to say and how to say it instead of walking away (this makes you complicit in the comment/thoughts)
- We need to develop guidance for how to respond to these expressions of hatred in various situations (There are some out there for teaching children how to respond/think through these issues- maybe models for us?); example- with bullying- it's not just responding to a bully but also helping/supporting the bully (this is a comparable approach that could be expanded)
- With trainees/students- it's part of conflict resolution/effective communication- have to be able to label unconscious biases
- Sometimes we are using euphemistic terms- how do we confront bias? We are leaders- we need to use this voice to guide and implement our missions- take it on more directly than in a list of terms such as this table
- Going back to poverty- we all know someone who works for $7-10/hour- there is an under-class of people, which is becoming a majority
- Groups of the disenfranchised are being pitted against each other
- We can have tools and strategies, etc. but it is more political and economic
- There are structural things in place
- Kamara Jones (outgoing president of Public Health Assn)- has talked about how systemic racism has impacted structure (for disabilities and more)- we have avoided this discussion
- There may be something healthy in uncovering these things- have to label it and confront it but there is still a context of fear; hope we will confront it, label it, and deal with it instead of ignoring it
- As a network we cannot be business as usual- these issues are very real, people who are holding a lot of fear; have to recognize how this impacts the people we are serving and how we prepare our professionals
- Highlight "call it like it is"- diversity can be anything; need to use the specific label/language- label it SES diversity, racial diversity, disability; you have to be able to confront it and feel comfortable doing it; but also have to be forgiving of ourselves when we don't respond and to keep moving forward to do it in the future
- Have to strengthen our collective voice but there is some fear/concern about free speech
- AUCD could convene some calls to gather information about what people are experiencing (e.g., incidents happening on campus) so that can guide strategy
- LEND Program offers a masters degree that is low-cost ($6000)- are there ways we can use our training funds to provide some systemic answers to help people move forward in their careers? Are there structural ways we can help people become more economically advantaged?
- We can do this in our projects as well- e.g., in NM they committed to hiring only English/Spanish bilingual speakers and only people from the community (got feedback that people didn't want home visitors that were their neighbors); can also contribute to workforce development- built up to have each of the home visitors who now have bachelors degrees (back to the idea of improving economic opportunity); created 2 new positions so that the home visitors could move up to a different level after obtaining their degree