

## 2016 UCEDD TA Institute Enriching Cultural Efforts: What's in Your Toolbox? March 3 - 4, 2016

### Session Notes

**Theme:** Personnel & Trainees

**Objective:** Develop and nurture partnerships with organizations representing or affiliated with diverse communities

**Facilitator:** Derrick Willis

#### Strategies Shared:

Be open-ended in invitation to collaborate. Here is what we can offer, how can it help you? Develop projects from the responses from community based organizations.

Reciprocity with community partners.

Consider participants on CAC. Are they representative of cultural communities?

Ask community members: what do you need? Give people a voice, and act on it in ways that influence policy, legislation, services. It's up to us to make authenticity, which builds trust.

Trainee alumns from a variety of cultures can help open door to partnerships/collaborations.

Tap into immigrant welcome center, provide UCEDD resources there. Identify what resources would be most helpful – what are the pressing priorities for these families if disability is involved with family?

Meet with community leaders to learn historical trauma. Don't do things the same way. Hire individuals from community as employment initiative, taking into consideration that some folks don't want to be seen by their neighbor. Set up offices in community neighborhoods, partner with community centers.

DD Act principles can take a different shape for different cultures – families may be “over”protective, keep kids at home. But stop and see how communities help solve own concerns – ex: Chinese set up daycare for kids, then Latino population heard about it and duplicated it. Then families purchased

small group of apartments for kids to live nearby parents. Some others protested about families taking federal money for segregated setting; look instead at how this is a small step for these Chinese & Latino families toward community living. This may be the only way these families can start to let go, based on their cultural values.

How to get to *benign intent* underneath difficult conversations and topics where differences seem to dominate.

Why are families building farms for their kids to live in segregated setting? Listen. Hear their values, beliefs, identify benign intent. Listen for strongly held beliefs by families. Recognize cognitive dissonance of difference between our beliefs/values, and those of families. Hold the differences.

Consider the implications the cultural broker experiences from partnering with university/UCEDD. Will the community ostracize him/her because of partnering with “ivory tower”? Talk openly about the implications of what it means for cultural brokers to engage with university.

Turnover of staff among partners can cause rifts in relationships when historical knowledge is lost, promises are not kept.

When we are listening, doing, surveying, etc. – always offer to share information back. Helps others understand that their time is well-used.

Strategy of building projects brick by brick by brick – continue to refine projects, build institutional expertise and relationships with community. Also how to stay involved if you don't get the next grant. Realize that when the grant is over, you still have a paycheck but community partners don't. Commitment to community must continue even when funding is done.

There are lots of groups that represent local Latino populations. Where best to start? Ask the families you work with about the community they engage with – will they introduce you to those communities? Start there, shows families you care about them specifically.

Connect with regional health coalitions, and identify other community organizations who have similar mandates to UCEDDs – partner with those groups. Listening session with folks invited from those communities can help identify shared priorities.

Connected with Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and discovered that the variety of different Hispanic cultures creates challenges even within Hispanic communities. Go to Hispanic cultural centers to learn what they do and what they need. Keep the conversation going, no projects yet, just learn without agenda.

Impossible to serve all communities at the same time – need to pick a place to start.

Amish community very reserved, hard to find cultural brokers.

Tennessee: Info & Referral services duplicated in Spanish to provide Spanish language I&R. Asked all agencies to see if they have bilingual staff members – most agencies say they do serve Spanish-speaking folks, but this breaks down if they don't have bilingual staff. For those who do, those orgs come together to share needs of populations they serve.

Community Conversations model of world café conducted with multiple Hispanic communities – learned from community leaders to call it Latin American (not Hispanic or Latino) Community Conversations. After the conversation, materials developed to reflect the discussion and share back with community so they see follow up. Never hold Community Conversation in disability organization or on university campus – a community group invites their friends and sets it up – has been held in coffeehouses, church fellowship hall.

Email invitations don't work – need key leaders to call and invite community members there. Also ask – how does your community spread the word? Learned some get info from radio, so purchased radio ads.

Dessert, door prizes, help keep it interesting and valuable for participants.

Much focus is on immigrant groups, also recognize that African American communities have significant needs, in some cases more needs, due to poverty, unemployment, poor education, etc. Many immigrants have no idea how to ask for services, if they come from countries that don't have services. They may not have a word for autism. Need to spend time learning and relationship-building.

## **Part 2 of Session**

### **Discussion and Strategies Shared**

- Dedicate portion of indirect/ kick back to foster and engage community partners in discussions
- Establish level of collaboration – one-time, one in a while, consistent.
- Mutual learning experience. Grass root organizations are too use to mainstream folks coming in to tell them what to do. Hear from them.
- Takes time to build relationship.
- Community based organization takes the lead; they tell you what to do.
- Live and learn. If not accustomed to a particular culture, get familiar with nuances before going in.
- Interpersonal contact, enrich relationship.
- Philadelphia – collaborative art program; rich diversity.
- Do you have a professional development policy, funds? Use to let staff explore areas of passion
- Incentivize PIs
- New partners – criminal justice system, probation office
- How to reach rural communities? Difficult to reach.
- No automatic in roads; need to build those.
- Intentional. Dedication. Not making promises you can't keep.
- Word spreads. Families, community members
- Cant end relationship when grant ends. Look for grants that allow you to continue or build on a project.
- Directors have to be committed to the initiatives.
- Community engagement is part of job.