

Village Conversations: Creating Space for Cultural Diversity at a Children's Advocacy Center

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1

Learning Objectives

- Explain the difference between saying an organization is committed to diversity and seeing that commitment exercised in practice
- Identify different methods by which attendees can replicate active cultural diversity practices within their own organizations
- Illustrate the importance of practicing cultural and racial diversity within attendees' own organizations



2

What is Village Conversations?



3

Beginnings of Village Conversations



- Vanessa Halyard's Push
 - What is a village? (Cultural background)
 - The importance of a village
- Focus on our back porch



4

Beginnings of Village Conversations (cont.)



- Vanessa Halyard's Push
 - What is a village? (Cultural background)
 - The importance of a village
 - Focus on our back porch
- Our local racial trauma history-- Past to Present
 - Slave trade
 - Neighborhood displacement
 - Police brutality
 - Walter Scott case
 - Racially motivated violence
 - Mother Emanuel AME Church massacre



5

Beginnings of Village Conversations (cont.)



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 - Racially motivated violence
 - Mother Emanuel AME Church massacre
- Focusing events
 - George Floyd's murder, and the Summer Uprisings (2020)
 - Calhoun Statue (2020)
 - City participation in Slavery
 - Romanticization of Charleston History



6

Why is this work important?



- **Implicit Biases**
 - We all have them
 - Increased awareness of biases can decrease their impact
- **Child Welfare & Implicit Bias**
 - Disproportionate referrals of children of color
 - Implicit biases can impact the outcome of these investigations



7

Why is this work important for Children's Advocacy Centers?



- CACs coordinate the investigation, treatment, and prosecution of child abuse cases
- **Multidisciplinary teams include:**
 - Child welfare, law enforcement, prosecution, victim advocacy, medical, & mental health
- Distrust of these systems by minority populations



8

Sources for inception



- **Internal Drivers**
- **External Inspiration**
 - New York Group out of Mt. Hope Family Center, Rochester, NY
- **Conversations and Coffee**
 - *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Science* (Sue).



9

The Format




- Multi-disciplinarian/inter-departmental format
 - Staff to Staff, Peer to Peer
 - Not from a leadership level, but **leadership supported**
 - Importance of including various contexts of work environment
 - Different colleagues, partners, clients, coworkers based on: Department, Education level, prior training
 - Importance of diverse backgrounds within the agency

10

Village Conversations: Who & What?



- Main committee
 - Multidisciplinary team: Family Advocate, Therapist/Forensic Interviewer, Prevention Manager, Staff Accountant, Program Evaluator, Grants & Program Evaluation Director/Clinical Psychologist
 - Meets weekly and discuss any updates, the newsletter, and current events
- Smaller committee
 - Newsletter
- Village Conversations Events
 - Once a month for all staff

11

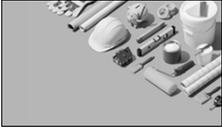
Village Conversations: Newsletter



- Newsletter Committee meets 1-2 times each month
- Monthly email sent to staff on a regular basis
 - Usually the first week of the month
- Topic changes every month

12

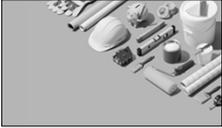
Tools and Tips to replicate at your organization



- How to organize your own committee
 - Speak up to find interest
 - Identify your needs/What do you need to talk about?
- Examples of topics
- Seek out the "history holders"
 - Is there anyone in the organization/neighborhood/community who could help?
- Decide what outlets work best for your capacity

16

Tools and Tips (cont.)



- Blind Spot Work
 - Harvard's Project Implicit <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>
- Flexibility and Listening
 - How do we choose the next topic?
- Support from Leadership
 - Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Consultants
 - GOODSTOCK Consulting
 - <https://www.goodstockconsulting.com>

17

A year later...



- Feedback
 - Surveys
 - Event specific for a "Pulse Check"
- Continuous Improvement
 - Is our format working?
- Challenges Encountered
 - Timing
 - Continued Engagement
 - How do we cover it ALL?

18

What are we doing differently?



- Policy Audit (in progress)
- Staff Recruitment
- Communications Efforts
- Community Outreach Events



19

A year later...



"We feel that this is an extremely important topic in professional development, and also makes us more aware when talking with clients about types of intergenerational and systemic trauma they may be experiencing. It helps us align and join with clients when we can have a better understanding of perspectives of different groups."

"We feel more confident to have these conversations and explore values because we are "armored" with knowledge and information about how to engage, when previously we would have avoided these conversations entirely."



20

Questions?



21

Thank you for joining our village!

Contact Us:
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