

Cultural Issues

Background Notes

Child welfare work involves working with a variety of cultures, religions, lifestyles and races. Developing self-awareness about your own culture and the commonalities and differences with the families you work with is invaluable. In addition, diversity in the work environment, not always visible, will enrich the atmosphere of the office as well as enhance the services provided to clients.

Tasks / Assignments:

- Talk with your supervisor about the different communities you will be working with. Ask about cultural, racial, sexual orientation, religious and other lifestyle differences that are part of the work in your local office. Are there common themes or needs in regard to child welfare that the different groups share? Are there unique culturally appropriate services for these families?
- Read the article: "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" by Peggy McIntosh. To find the article go to www.google.com and search for the author or title. Talk with your supervisor or co-workers about how this appears in the field of child welfare?

Discoveries:

- *What are the unique services available in your community for the varying needs of your clients?*
- *What is the point of the article on privilege?*

Cultural Issues continued...

Tasks / Assignments:

- Find out how your office staff arrange for interpreters or translation services. Observe an interview conducted in a foreign language. How would having an interpreter affect your interview with a client?
- Follow a case of a family with a culture different from your own either beginning at screening or initial assessment. Ask the coworker managing the case how they handle the case unique to the culture of the family.
- Consider challenges & strengths you might face internally in your work with clients with differences and discuss this with your supervisor.
- Attend the required training(s) on Cultural Competency. Check with your supervisor for how to register for these classes.

Discoveries:

- *What is the practice with clients who don't speak or read English?*
- *How do you arrange for an interpreter in a foreign language or a sign language interpreter?*
- *What did you learn about working with families with differences?*

