



Engaging in Culturally Responsive Leadership

There has been an alarming increase in hate crime / harassment and display of rape culture nationally. For those of us in this Movement, and particularly those of us from targeted communities, our professional, personal, and political selves are meeting at an intersection. The fear we feel is crossing those boundaries we might have once tried to hold as separate.

Many of us are feeling unsafe in our complex identities today. Now more than ever, we need our allies to support us in our lived experiences and identities as we continue to do the work of ending sexual violence.

As such, we felt it timely to offer ways in which we, as supervisors, can be most supportive to staff of color and others from communities experiencing marginalization. Good supervision helps us grow leaders and promote safety within our workplaces and our Movement at large.

Engaging in culturally responsive leadership is one way to ensure our organizations become safer spaces and help our staff of diverse communities feel supported at work in a world where experiences with oppression are common for them.

Specific One-on-One Supervision Recommendations

Staff of color face discrimination and racism every day. Even if your agency is a safer and diverse place, racist interactions before, after, or during work with clients or outside partners are likely to occur.

- Help them grow by supporting training and professional development opportunities to increase their confidence to take on a leadership role.
- Be curious. Ask people what concerns they have and why. Remember to explore someone else's experience without inserting your own, trying to fix, or endorsing a political stance. Avoid statements such as, "We need to wait and see," or, "You don't have any reason to be afraid..." Although

intended to be reassuring, these statements can actually feel minimizing or invalidating.

- Provide opportunities to learn from your staff the traditions, beliefs, and social norms from their background that provide new avenues for advocacy and healing for vicarious trauma.
- Protect your bilingual advocates from being the interpreter for everyone, everywhere. Ensure staff within the agency, as well as agency partners, understand a bilingual advocate's role, ethics, and healthy boundaries and that your staff feel empowered and supported in asserting their boundaries.
- Support the great deal of additional time it takes for them to do their jobs well and grow their programs. The work that advocates for culturally specific programs do often requires a lot of time spent building relationships with culturally specific communities.
- Foster connection with others. Allow paid and supported time for a staff of color to connect with a mentor or networking group specific to their identified community.
- Allow paid and supported time for translation and interpretation if that is a part of their job duties. This takes a great deal of time and often requires quiet, focused space for thinking in English and their native language, switching quickly back and forth, accessing dictionaries as well as accessing peers who can help translate concepts.
- As a part of a small or specific community, personal and professional lines may blur easily and unintentionally. Help staff consider how they will navigate their boundaries, confidentiality, and self-care.
- Be proactive in regularly assessing your staff's needs. Check in regularly about how your supervision style is working for them and if there are further supports they need that you can provide.

Agency Level Recommendations

- Teach all staff basic knowledge on how to provide culturally appropriate services for when multilingual or bicultural staff are out of the office; for example, how to access and utilize your agency's interpreter service. Burnout for bilingual advocates specifically is high because of a feeling

they are the only ones to do the work and may be on-call too often and/or less likely to take vacations. Building all staff knowledge and an expectation for all staff will help support a bilingual advocate's self-care.

- Provide opportunities for your staff to talk about how personal convictions and cultural norms intersect with advocacy and the values that guide your agency's work. Ensure agency policies reflect an acceptance of a diversity of definitions of family structures, self-identified values, etc.
- Reference your mission and vision that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion and make a statement reasserting your organization's commitment to this mission.
- Provide a space, time, and/or person staff can come to report incidents of discrimination.
- Have agreed upon norms for effective engagement during discussions: using "I" statements, asking questions from a place of genuine curiosity, etc.

References

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Reading, Resources, & Tools

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"Working While Black: 10 Racial Microaggressions Experienced in the Workplace," Crunk Feminist Collective. <http://www.crunkfeministcollective.com/2014/11/11/working-while-black-10-racial-microaggressions-experienced-in-the-workplace/>

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