



CULTURAL COMPETENCY UPDATE

...a newsletter to address cultural issues that enable us to effectively work in cross cultural situations.

February 2014

Volume 10, Issue 2

Reach for the Future

Abraham Andres, MFT I, MHC I, Juvenile Justice Staff

Inside this issue:

Reach for the Future 1/2

“It’s not where you come from, it’s not what you have or what you don’t have, it’s what you do with what you have right now” - Albert Mensah. This was one of the several messages given to hundreds of high school teenagers by motivational speaker Albert Mensah himself. Albert was the key note speaker for the 2013 Reach for The Future leadership conference. Reach for the Future is a youth leadership conference put on by the behavioral health department of Butte County. The purpose of this conference is to give teenage youth the opportunity to overcome fears and develop confidence and leadership skills through activities that promote support and stimulate the mind, heart, and body.

BHRS Cultural Competence Oversight Committee meets on the 2nd Monday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in the Redwood Room, 800 Scenic Drive

Personally, I had the pleasure of attending the 2013 conference as a youth counselor for several teenage youth from Stanislaus County. I must admit that initially I was a bit skeptical about going on a 3 day conference with a large group of teenagers that sometimes seem to speak their own language and have their own culture. My skepticism was later coupled with curiosity when I heard that there would be no cell phone reception at the conference grounds and that the use of electrical devices would not be allowed. My first question was, “what will they do with themselves?” The answer to this question quickly came as I witnessed teens begin to interact, make meaningful connections, and bond positively with other youth and staff. I stood amazed as I watched close to 350 high school teens grow in their capacity for understanding, tolerance, hope, and change.



Sponsored by Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors

Reach for the future is structured in a way so that the attention span of a youth is captured at all time. Youth have the opportunity to participate in their choice of 11 workshops, hear guest speakers, participate in a talent show, and take part in various physical activities. The workshops consist of topics such as alcohol use awareness/prevention, the dangers and consequences of cyberbullying, the importance of self care, healthy relationships, and tolerance to diversity. The guest speakers at the conference were characterized by their ability to inspire, teach, and motivate. There were several instances where I noticed several youth smile, cry, and laugh during the same presentation.

It is not often that I hear teenagers describe an educational experience as “amazing”, “unbelievable”, or “life changing”. Yet, these are just a few of the

statements that I heard from several of the youth that participated in Reach for the Future. At the culmination of the conference I laid eyes upon the same familiar faces of the youth that we first came with, yet I noticed something distinctly different in their expression. I saw smiling faces that expressed joy, self confidence, and hope. They had transformed themselves into self confident, motivated, and caring leaders eager to make the best of what they have “right now.”

Highlights of Cultural Equity and Social Justice Committee (CESJC) (Formerly CCOC) Dec. 2013 and Jan. 2014 Meetings

Dec. 2013

- * The committee had a “Taste of Culture” potluck. Members brought in food from their culture to share with everyone and explained what it was.
- * Ruben Imperial proposed a name change for the committee, Cultural Competency Equity and Social Justice Committee. Ruben asked the committee for feedback to be discussed in January’s meeting. Dorbea Cary suggested Cultural Humility instead of Cultural Competency.
- * Madelyn shared the history of the Cultural Competency Plan and the most recent request by the State to update the data on the plan. She also presented the CLAS (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services) standards as a framework for a new Cultural Competency Plan.
- * Ruben Imperial shared a PowerPoint presentation about the community capacity efforts at communities such as Grayson and other communities. The PowerPoint will be posted on the Intranet/Extranet. Some examples are:
 - West Modesto Congregations more Mental Health friendly
 - Assyrian Collaborative looking into having an Assyrian Summit
 - CSU Stanislaus Peer Support Group
- * The Cultural Competence Champion Award nomination form was distributed and the awards will be presented at the January meeting. The nomination form will also be sent electronically. Forms are due on 1/3/14.

Jan. 2014

- * The Cultural Competence Champion Award nomination date was extended to 1/24/14. Christina Kenney suggested for volunteers to be nominated. The Champion Award Nomination Form was distributed and will also be sent electronically. The awards will be presented at the February 10, 2014, meeting.
- * Ruben Imperial presented a PowerPoint explaining the meaning of the new committee name change, Cultural Equity and Social Justice Committee. Ruben explained the new committee name aligns with the current state-wide efforts on cultural competency.
- * Ruben Imperial reported the State is requesting an updated Cultural Competency Plan and BHRS is currently working with the State to find out exactly what the request entails. Ruben stated the previous plan submitted in 2010 will be revised to meet the department’s current needs. Ruben will keep the committee updated as more information is known.

If you have questions or suggestions regarding Cultural Competency, please forward them by e-mail to:

Ruben Imperial, rimerial@stanbhhs.org

Jorge Fernandez, jfernandez@centerforhumanservices.org