

Racism and Homelessness Worksheet

A guide for starting a conversation about racism with your colleagues

Starting points:

- Agree on ground rules for the discussion
- Keep the conversation focused on race. It is easy to get distracted by other topics that may seem easier to discuss. Appoint a “topic-watcher” to steer the conversation back when it strays towards poverty and other isms.
- Decide on a goal for the conversation depending on who is involved. Is this the first conversation of many or a one-time event?
- Become agents of change. The people around table need to be ready to bring about change in the organization.
- Don’t tackle all the topics in one meeting. Pick an area of focus that is most relevant to your group.

Topic areas to get you started:

- Share concrete, successful, practices of your organization in providing culturally sensitive service.
- Are the client activities and environment of the organization multi-cultural and welcoming (food, holidays, art)? Name two changes you could implement this month to make the environment more multi-cultural.
- Describe embedded racial inequities and barriers to opportunities within your organization.
- Is undoing racism addressed in the mission, vision and goals of your organization? Give examples of how these goals have or have not been implemented.
- Is there a deliberate plan to hire and promote staff of color? Is there a deliberate plan to have the staff reflect the demographics of the clients? Describe the staff experience at your organization.
- How can your organization give clients opportunities to provide feedback and suggestions about how to reduce racial inequities and barriers? Discuss examples of racism among your client group and the response of staff.
- Undoing Institutional Racism trainings define racism as, “the systematic subordination of members of targeted racial groups who have relatively little power in the United States by members of the agent racial group who have more social power. This subordination is supported by the actions of individuals, cultural norms and values, and the institutional structures and practices of society. Discuss your reaction to this definition of racism. Does your group define racism differently?

Resources:

- Race Matters toolkit available online through the Annie E. Casey Foundation
<http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/PublicationsSeries/RaceMatters.aspx>
- Links to publications and resources from the Coalition of Anti-Racist Whites
<http://www.carw.org/index.html>
- Definitions, online resources and a global perspective of racism by the World Affairs Council
http://www.world-affairs.org/globalclassroom/youth/racism_resources.htm