

DIVERSITY ACTION TEAM (DAT)

MISSION

The DAT is charged with raising awareness and showing appreciation for the unique differences of our clients and staff through education, consultation, communication and celebration.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the Diversity Action Teams (DAT) include, but are not limited to:

To Consult

- Identify barriers and provide recommendations for corrective action on case practice concerns related to human diversity issues in child placement (e.g. religion, orientation and gender identity, cross-cultural, ethnic hair and skin care, etc.);
- Make referrals for workplace bias related issues to the Offices of Diversity & Equity, Multicultural Affairs, & Human Resources;
- Provide recommendations and/or information regarding issue-specific training to area office and facility management;
- Represent region or facility at statewide DAT meetings;
- Act as the medium of communication for Commissioner's initiatives related to human diversity;
- Respond to and address issues of insensitivity by recommending appropriate strategies for resolution;
- Incorporating diversity discussions and actions into regional, office and facility action plans, objectives, policies, procedures and best practice guidelines; and
- Identify concerns regarding staff and/or clients' cultural needs not being met.

To Implement

- Recommendations of the statewide Diversity Action Team;
- Commissioner's identified diversity goals;
- Practice initiatives related to efforts that address disproportionality and disparate treatment within the region/facility;
- Specific diversity actions and performance measurements as part of daily operational procedures to ensure equal treatment for clients, their families and fellow staff;
- Performance measures to determine the effectiveness of the DAT; and
- Recommendations and strategies which address issues of insensitivity.

To Educate

- Provide activities designed to build professional and personal development and growth;
- Develop and support reciprocal education relationships with other regions, supervisors, coworkers, clients and the community we serve;
- Facilitate diversity discussions through formal and informal activities;
- Recognize and celebrate the diversity of coworkers; and
- Effectively communicate to all regional and facility staff updates and initiatives which value human differences and promote cultural competencies via the statewide DCF Diversity Newsletter.

Characteristics of Effective Diversity Action Teams

- Well respected, competent, and committed leadership
- Diverse representation (disciplines and persons)
- Trained committed and reliable members
- Senior management representative(s) to serve as liaison to senior decision and policy makers
- Solution focused – producing tangible, measurable, visible outcomes
- A common knowledge and understanding of diversity management language and concepts
- Standing meetings
- Confidentiality
- Inform and educate constituents/stakeholders
- Perform, model, and lead as diversity champions
- Represent agency, client and staff interests
- Communicate meeting outcomes to staff
- Establish and revisit diversity goals and objectives
- Engage in courageous conversations
- Flexibility

DAT MEMBERSHIP SELECTION

The process of selection and monitoring DAT members is the responsibility of the Regional Administrator or Superintendent of each region and facility. Upon request, the Directors of the Offices of Diversity and Equity and Multicultural Affairs are available to provide guidance and technical assistance.

MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY

DIVERSITY ACTION TEAM

DCF employees who are in good standing with the Department, have an interest in ensuring that culturally and linguistically competent services are an integral part of the agency's operations, and have demonstrated a commitment to ensuring an equitable and affirming workplace for all workers are encouraged to apply for the DAT in their Region or Facility. Other criteria/abilities to be considered for selection include but are not limited to:

1. Model an appreciation for, and knowledge of, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, sexual, orientation, and other diversity differences.
2. Provide support in co-worker and client intercultural skill development.
3. Give helpful and usable feedback.
4. Teach the importance of understanding how behaviors impact others.
5. Promote and model empathetic understanding.
6. Help others see how intercultural competence increases productivity.
7. Create a collaborative relationship with co-workers and clients.
8. Be a good listener.
9. Ask questions that engage co-workers and clients in critical thinking.
10. Demonstrate dedication to the DAT through active participation in meetings and other related events

(numbers 1-10 have been adapted from the Top Ten Functions of a Diversity Coach - see Appendix B).

APPENDIX A

TOP TEN MULTICULTURAL TEAM CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TIPS

Adapted from DTUI Lesson Editor [lesson@diversityintl.com]

For additional information regarding training or resources on any of the below listed activities, contact the Office of Multicultural Affairs at (860) 550-6337.

Conflict among team members is inevitable. In fact, conflict can be helpful when it challenges team members to explore new ideas, increase curiosity about differences, and stretch the group's problem-solving efforts. However, managing conflict within a team made up of different cultural and linguistic groups can be challenging due to the differences in values, assumptions, and communication styles. Team building techniques that help members understand the nature of intercultural conflict and constructive methods for resolving it will help them work out disagreements on their own. The following are some guidelines to keep in mind when developing the team and managing conflict.

1. Create an environment among team members so that they will be open to sharing information about themselves and to increase their willingness to hear and accept feedback from others about their conflict resolution challenges.
2. Help team members understand that conflict is a result of differences in needs, objectives, and values. Indicate that these differences can enhance the team's productivity, rather than deter it.
3. Help team members understand that they must understand how each team member perceives motives, works, actions, and situations differently in order to understand the differences among them.
4. Help team members understand that each of them has learned to expect certain outcomes in interpersonal relationships and such differences can block teamwork. Help them explore the blocks to increase their willingness to work through issues, collaborate, and compromise.
5. Help team members understand that each of them has a different style of responding to and working through conflict within their own cultural group and with members of other cultural groups. The styles include, but are not limited to, Win/Lose, Problem Solving, Avoidance, Accommodating, and Compromising. Learning about the differences will help the teamwork more effectively together.
6. Do not intervene too quickly when conflict occurs between two or more team members. Allow them an opportunity to work it out among themselves after they have the awareness and conflict resolution skills. However, observe how they individually handle the conflict to offer constructive feedback.

7. Intervene when the parties clearly have deficient awareness and skills to work out the solution or when the conflict escalates.
8. Use a third party to mediate. The impartial mediator focuses on helping each member understand the problem, the different points of view among them, identifying intercultural barriers, and identifying what needs to happen to come to a solution. Have at least two team members, or someone in human resources, trained to competently mediate disputes.
9. Sometimes individual team members do not have the level of commitment to the team or the level of personal growth needed to work through conflict within a team setting. A supervisor may need to consider replacing individuals in order to increase team productivity. The person may work better on a different team, or in individualized tasks.
10. Review conflict resolution awareness and skills periodically, and bring in new knowledge about resolving conflict when the information becomes available.