Working with “Community” when the worker is bound by “Culture”.

STARTTS
David Ajak Ajang
Communities in Cultural Transition Project (CiCT) Officer.
David.ajang@health.nsw.gov.au
0422882060

Community Development Master Class
31 May 2018
Roles that bicultural worker can perform.

- **Bilingual worker** (language)
- **Bicultural worker** (Language + Culture)
- **Multicultural worker** (Language + Culture + Experience + formal education)
What is Culture?

“…culture at the group level consist of \textit{shared elements} which provide the \textit{standards} for perceiving, believing, evaluating, communicating and acting among those who share a language, a history and a geographic location”. (Ferdman & Horenczyk 2000)
Which Community?

- Community of Faith. (*Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Atheism ....*)
- Language-based community. (*Dinka, Bantal Pulaar, Assyrian, Tamil....*)
- Community of interest. (*Student’s Associations, Unions, clubs, Refugee Settlement services’ organisations*)

Defining community is problematic and that underpinned the difficulty in defining culture.
A worker bounds by culture

- “A person employed to work specifically with people or communities with whom they share similar cultural experiences and understandings, and who is employed to use their cultural skills and knowledge to negotiate and communicate between communities and their employing agency”. (FECCA, n.a)

- This is what the employing agencies expect from their bicultural worker.
Benefits of a Bicultural worker in Service provision.

(a) To service providers

- Brings about efficiency in service delivery hence saving cost to the organisation.
- Poster rapid learning between the employing agency and the community and/or communities of the bicultural worker. (articulate issues)
- An authentic way for an agency to signal to the community they want to serve that they seriously want to help, hence creating a deep seated trust.
Benefits of a Bicultural worker in Service provision....... 

(a) To Community
- Poster rapid learning between the employing agency and the community and/or communities of the bicultural worker. (articulate issues)
- Able to do things that service providers are not able to do such as working at odd hours to achieve better outcomes for communities and individuals.
- Clarify misunderstanding and misconception of community toward services and mainstream community and vice versa.
Challenges

- Defining culture is problematic and this has a flow on effect on the individual bicultural worker. There is always confusion and conflict as the worker navigate between the community and the employing agency.

- Incongruences in Community expectation and what bicultural are able to deliver.

- High rate of burnout may be possible (Pressure from community, own issues, Expectation to work long hours and be constantly available.)
A What makes a “good” Bicultural Worker. Key attributes.

- Good command of host community’s language. (English)
- Unwavering commitment to social Justice and equality.
- Continuous learner (Thirst for knowledge).
- Strong sense of identity.
- Social Progressivism/liberalism.
- Endurance
- Good Communication skills.
- Leadership skills.
- A bicultural worker must adhere to organisational professional code of conduct and be guided by it.
What makes a good employer?

- Leadership for “the’ bigger picture not daily deliverables.
- Structured as well as unstructured support. (supervisions, mentoring and trainings)
- Flexibility.
- Appropriate rewards and recognitions including promotions.
- Genuine derive from the employing agency to change people’s life for the better. (Not driven by funding requirements)
References


Centre for Multicultural Youth. (2011). *Addressing the Strengths and Complexities of Bicultural Youth and Family Work*. Centre for Multicultural Youth. FECCA. (n.a). *Australia's Bilingual and Bicultural Workforce*. Deakin: FECCA.


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