



# Guidelines for Challenging Racism and Other Forms of Oppression

- 1. CHALLENGE DISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR.** Ignoring the issues will not make them go away and silence can send the message that you are in agreement with such attitudes and behaviors. Make it clear that you will not tolerate racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual jokes or slurs, or any actions that demean any person or group. Your intervention may not always take place at the exact time or place of the incident, but it must be addressed promptly.
- 2. EXPECT TENSION AND CONFLICT AND LEARN TO MANAGE IT.** Sensitive and deep-seated issues are unlikely to change without some struggle and in many situations, conflict is unavoidable. Face your fears and discomforts and remember that tension and conflict can be positive forces that foster growth.
- 3. BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN ATTITUDES, STEREOTYPES, AND EXPECTATIONS** and be open to discovering the limitations they place on your perspective. We have all been socialized to believe many myths and misconceptions and none of us remain untouched by the discriminatory messages in our society. Be honest with yourself about your own prejudices and biases. If you do not know something, or are not sure how to handle a situation, say so, and seek the information or help that you need. Practice not getting defensive when discriminatory attitudes or behaviors are pointed out to you.
- 4. ACTIVELY LISTEN TO AND LEARN FROM OTHERS' EXPERIENCES.** Don't minimize, trivialize, or deny people's concerns. Make an effort to see situations through their eyes.
- 5. USE LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOR THAT IS NON-BIASED AND INCLUSIVE** of all people regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, disabilities, sexual orientation, class, age, religion, or other identities .
- 6. PROVIDE ACCURATE INFORMATION** to challenge stereotypes and biases. Take responsibility for educating yourself about your own and other's cultures. Do not expect people from different backgrounds to always educate you about their culture, history, or to explain racism or sexism to you. People are more willing to share when you take an active role and the learning is mutual.
- 7. ACKNOWLEDGE DIVERSITY AND AVOID STEREOTYPICAL THINKING.** Don't ignore or pretend not to see our rich human differences. Acknowledging obvious differences is not the problem, but placing negative value judgments on those differences is! Stereotypes about those differences are always hurtful because they generalize, limit, and deny people's full humanity.
- 8. BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN HESITANCIES TO INTERVENE** in these kinds of situations. Confront your own fears about interrupting discrimination, set your priorities, and take action. Develop "response-ability" (the ability to respond).
- 9. PROJECT A FEELING OF UNDERSTANDING, LOVE, AND SUPPORT** when confronting individuals. Without preaching, state how you feel and firmly address the hurtful behavior or attitude while supporting the dignity of the person. Be non-judgmental but know the bottom line. Issues of human dignity, justice, and safety are non-negotiable.
- 10. ESTABLISH STANDARDS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND BEHAVIOR** and hold yourself and others accountable. Demonstrate your personal and organizational commitment in practices, policies, and procedures, both formal and informal. Maintain high expectations for all people.
- 11. BE A LEADER AND A ROLE MODEL** and be willing to take the risks that leadership demands. Reflect and practice anti-bias, multicultural values in all aspects of your life. Demonstrate that you respect and value the knowledge, talents, and diversity of all people.
- 12. WORK COLLECTIVELY WITH OTHERS AND SUPPORT EFFORTS** that combat prejudice, harassment, discrimination, exclusion, and oppression in all its forms. Social change is a long term process and it's easy to get discouraged but together we have the strength and vision to make a difference.