Service-Learning
Student Expectations

Utah State University
Preparing to Serve: Training 2

• Social Justice
• Cultural Sensitivity
  • Definition and Background
  • Sensitivity in Populations
    • Poverty
    • Sexual Orientation
    • Spirituality and Religion
    • Language
Social Justice

- Social justice works to ensure equal treatment for all regardless of their background, experiences, or culture
  - Equality and justice should reach every part of society, rather than discriminate against some based on culture
- Absence of social justice results in social oppression such as:
  - Racism
  - Sexism
  - Ableism
  - Ageism
  - Classism
  - Heterosexism
Social Justice - Definition

• The practice of promoting and protecting human rights and responsibilities, with a particular emphasis on the economic and social rights of society’s most vulnerable groups.
  • Creation of a just society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity, while protecting equal access to liberties, rights, and opportunities
  • Injustice – discrimination against or well-being/welfare constrained or prejudiced on

• The world is organized in ways that encourage people to use difference to include or exclude, reward or punish, credit or discredit, elevate or oppress, value or devalue, leave alone or harass.

(Privilege, power, and difference, 2001, Allan G Johnson)
What does this mean for me?

• Social injustice is often institutional – systems are set up to value one group over another

• Understand that everyone’s experience is not the same as yours – be culturally sensitive to understand how their experiences might be different than yours.
Become an Ally

• Ally – a person who experiences privilege and rejects the dominant identity and takes action against oppression out of a believe that eliminating oppression with benefit all.
  • Be comfortable with your own identify
  • Take responsibility of your own education towards cultural sensitivity
  • Acknowledge unearned privilege
  • Act against social injustice

• USU hosts an Ally program committed to providing a safe space against gender discrimination
Cultural Sensitivity

- Culture is the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group.
- Cultural Sensitivity is a set of skills that enables you to learn about, build relationships with, and work with people who are different from you.
  - Learn how to serve them better within their own communities.
  - Have the capacity to function effectively in cultures other than yours.
Cultural Sensitivity while Serving

• Important to understand others’ culture in order to function respectfully and effectively with them

• Being culturally sensitive doesn’t end at knowledge about other cultures
  • You must gain understanding on how your views, biases, and assumptions might impact your interactions and relationships with others
  • This involves self-reflection to better understand yourself
  • Being comfortable with and respecting different cultures
  • Long term goal – not something you can just gain overnight, but something you work on for years.
Cultural Identity

• Many different elements make up a person’s culture including:
  • Race
  • Ethnicity
  • Gender
  • Sex
  • Religion
  • National Origin
  • Age
  • Social Class
  • Disability Status
  • Sexual Orientation
  • Education
  • Others

• Cultural Identity refers to how a person identifies themselves culturally based on their experiences.

• Important to think about your own cultural identity so you can better understand your possible views, biases, and ways you interact with others.
How Culture Impacts Service

• You might be exposed to new cultures or ways of life in your service work; it’s best to be prepared for this.
  • This might be outside of your comfort zone
  • Your own culture might impact the outcomes of the service or the assistance you provide to your community or clients.

• A person’s culture and experiences might impact the way they view community resources or organizations
  • The community members you are serving might have a different view than you.
  • The people you are working with at the community organization might have a different cultural view than you.
  • The Community Partner might have its own cultural
  • All cases will impact the way you are able to serve and your experience
Work in Progress

• Gaining Cultural Competency is a continuous process. What can you do to improve:
  1. Understand yourself and your biases
  2. Challenge your assumptions
  3. Use appropriate language and body language
  4. Recognize Power and Privilege
  5. Be aware of assumptions
  6. Do not assume everyone is like you
With Cultural Competency you should be able to:

- Value differences and similarities between yourself and others
- Learn about a culture and internalize that knowledge for future interactions
- Recognize the importance of culture and context in yourself and others
- Celebrate Diversity
- Be better prepared to interact successfully with other cultures
Cultures you might see when Serving

- Poverty
- Language
- Sexual Orientation
- Spirituality and Religion
Poverty

Assumptions are easy to make regarding poverty, socio-economic class, or a person’s availability of resources. Suspending judgment when you’re working in the community is key to being culturally sensitive. Did you know:

- 16.6% of households in Cache County are below the poverty level
- 22.7% of Logan City residents have incomes below the poverty level.
- 24.8% of Logan City children are below poverty level

Be aware of your assumptions and be careful with how your own reaction, language, or experience around class and poverty might impact those you are working with.
Language

- Every culture has their own language and rules on what might be accepted or questionable.
- When you are working in the community, be careful with your language – refrain from using slang, obscene, or offensive words or phrases.

*Words that you and your friends might think are acceptable might be offensive or discriminatory against other cultures.*

*Think before you speak!*
Language

- Residents of Cache Valley also might not have the same first language as you – making communication more challenging
  - 13.8% of households in Cache Country speak a language other than English at home.
  - Nearly 7% of all persons in Cache County are foreign born

- Remember to respect each person – even if they speak a different language than you – listen carefully to what they are saying and ensure they are being heard.
  - Don’t be afraid to ask for clarification or for a person to repeat themself so you can make sure you understand them.
  - Apologize if you offend someone.
Sexual Orientation

• For nearly 20 years the US Government has included sexual orientation in policies protect against discrimination – we expect the same from you!

• Please respect all those you work with regardless of sexual orientation, gender identify, or sex.
  • Some people may not be comfortable discussing their gender identity or sexual orientation
  • These discussions also may not be work appropriate.
  • Err on the side of caution and respect at all times
Spirituality/Religion

- Not everyone goes to the same church as you or follows the same spirituality.
- It is inappropriate to advocate for your religion over another or none.
- Do not discriminate against those wearing religious garb; respect everyone regardless of religious culture.
- Keep your religious believes and responses to yourself – you are at the service site to serve!
Conclusion

• This is a life long process, but one you can work towards to better prepare yourself to work with communities and cultures unlike your own.

• To learn more about social justice and cultural sensitivity, check out USUS’s Access and Diversity Center in TSC 315 or online at http://www.usu.edu/accesscenter/
• Thank you for watching our Social Justice and Cultural Sensitivity training. Hopefully this prepare you to have a more aware, meaningful, and helpful service experience.

• If you have additional questions, feel free to contact the Service-Learning Program, or the Access and Diversity Center on the third floor of TSC