### BAY AREA SOCIAL SERVICES CONSORTIUM EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM CASE STUDY CULTURAL SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION: SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES Laura Valdivia\*

### INTRODUCTION

"It is not enough to diversify the workforce to mirror the customers. Knowledge, skill and ability must be incorporated to enhance cultural competency."

In organizations today, employers are challenged with diversifying the workforce to mirror the customers that it serves. In the advent of Propositions 209, this effort will become more challenging than ever. However, concentration in diversity should not cease. It is imperative that employers promote, manage and find ways to value the culture of its staff and strive to be culturally competent by recognizing the diversity within the community. If employees feel that they are valued and their contributions are recognized, then they will become motivated to provide the best quality service to the diverse customers being served.

In all organizations, the guiding principles are to provide high quality services that support and assist the customers. In Family and Children Services (FCS), services are directed to assist children, families, neighborhoods and communities. But in order to do this, there is a level of trust and commitment that must be developed and demonstrated. In addition, programs which foster collaboration and creativity can contribute to effective services. While there is no formula or top ten list of things to say and do when dealing with adults and children of diverse cultures, the demonstration of sensitivity and respect is the common ingredient. The development of an understanding and appreciation requires the promotion and managing of on-going education, training and activities. The knowledge, skills and understanding is a life-long process and cannot be learned or mastered overnight. San Francisco Department of Human Services has found a way to educate staff on issues facing persons of different backgrounds within Family and Children Services.

The focus of my BASSC Internship in San Francisco Department of Human Services, was to learn about the Cultural Specialist In-Service Professional Development & Certification program in the Family and Children Services Division and other programs fostering diversity and civil rights. Wanda Jung, Section Manager of the AFDC Foster Care Program, was my mentor. A former BASSC participant and Civil Rights Officer, I had the pleasure of meeting Ms. Jung when she did her internship with Alameda County looking at our Diversity and Conflict Mediation Programs. Though Ms. Jung was promoted to Section Manager for AFDC Foster Care and CalWorks Programs, she graciously agreed to be my mentor. Ms. Jung's experience and field of expertise, afforded me the opportunity to connect with many talented, experienced and committed staff.

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In preparation for this case study, I had the pleasure of meeting: Sheldon Martin, Chair for Cultural Specialist Committee; Curtis Hinton, Chair for Diversity Task Force; Jerry Lew, Diversity Training Consultant; Arlin Alger, Training Officer for FCS; Joyce Crossland, Staff Development Specialist; and my counterpart, Magaly Fernandez. While most of the staff that I connected with have been employed by San Francisco for many years, Ms. Fernandez has been with San Francisco for less than four months. This internship has enabled us to share ideas surrounding the function and role of a Civil Rights Officer in today's Social Services Agency.

### BACKGROUND

"The soft-minded man always fear change. He feels security in the status quo, and he has an almost morbid fear of the new idea. For him, the greatest pain is the pain of a new idea." Martin Luther King, Jr.

The mission of San Francisco's Department of Human Services is to help those in need and empower clients through case management and support services to become self-supporting. In 1994, it was reported that approximately 65% of the children in San Francisco foster care were African American. Recognizing that internal changes were necessary to reduce the number of African American children in foster care, the department increased its commitment to Family Preservation. In its commitment, the department looked at ways in which an in-depth understanding of African American culture among Family and Children Services (FCS) could be fostered to staff who work directly with African American families and children.

Modeling a program established in 1990 by the Department of Public Health, and at the recommendation of Brian Cahill, General Manager, the Department of Human Services formed a Cultural Competence and Language Waiver Task Force. The objective of this task force was to look at ways in which the department could enhance its staff and meet the cultural competency to better serve the community.

The task force recommended that a Cultural Specialist Committee be established to look at a Cultural Specialist In-Service Professional Development & Certification Program for African American Families in the Family and Children Services Division. This group was comprised of child welfare workers and supervisors. The Agency Civil Rights Officer was included in the committee. It was then expanded to include the Staff Development Specialist to address the training component and the Human Resources Analyst to address personnel issues such as the waiver/certification.

This case study will examine the steps taken by the Cultural Specialist Committee to reach the present stage in which the first Cultural Specialist for African American Families has been selected.

### COMPONENTS OF A CULTURAL SPECIALIST PROGRAM

"The word **culture** is used because it implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a racial ethnic, religious, or social group. The word **competence** is used because it implies having the capacity to function within the context of culturally integrated patterns of human behavior as defined by the group."

<u>Towards a Culturally Competent System of</u> <u>Care</u>, March 1989

### CREATION OF THE TASK FORCE ON Cultural Competence and Language Waivers

The Task Force on Cultural Competence and Language Waivers was created in response to a report completed in 1993 by the Department of Human Resources which contained a series of recommendations. The report was in response to allegations of racial discrimination brought to the Board of Supervisors. A group of African American workers alleged discrimination when it appeared that the layoff had an adverse impact on African American staff. Hearings were held before the Board of Supervisors and an investigation was conducted by the San Francisco City and County Equal Employment Opportunity Office. The investigation found no evidence of adverse impact and determined that the department had followed appropriate layoff procedures. However, recognizing that the concerns and perceptions of discrimination existed, Brian Cahill, General Manager recommended the formation of the task force.

In 1994, the Task Force recommended that the Department of Social Services (DSS) develop an African American waiver for service programs. As there was a high percentage of children who were in foster care, and recognizing the need to have an understanding of the issues facing families and children, it was recommended that the waiver be developed and tested in the Family and Children Services Division.

Recognizing that there was a need for concentration on intensive services up front, to keep families together, the department decided to pilot this program in the Family Preservation Unit. Workers in this unit are required to dedicate 4 hours of community service a week to foster a partnership and better understanding of the cultures. Since a caseload reduction is already in place to allow for the community work, it made sense to have the certified workers provide 4 hours of consultation with staff on African American issues, in lieu of the community work.

### **DEFINITION OF A WAIVER**

"Developing a cultural competency waiver does not and should not ignore the need for culturally competent staff for all the ethnic communities we serve and the need for cultural competency to permeate the entire organization." -Brian Cahill

A waiver is a restriction on the certification of eligibles. With a cultural specialist waiver, only those who can meet the cultural specialist requirement will be considered. For purposes of this case study, only those with an African American Cultural Certification would be considered for the position.<sup>1</sup>

The use of a Cultural Specialist certification would allow the Department of Human Services to employ staff sensitive to the unique issues and concerns facing African American Families and Children and to provide culturally relevant services more effectively. All interested parties must meet the minimum qualifications to be considered for certification. To be African American is not a pre-requisite to qualify for the Cultural Specialist Certification for African American Families.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In a meeting with Local 535 on February 5, 1997, Labor supported the concept, but recommended that the title be changed to Cultural Specialist with the understanding that this certification could be expanded to include other cultures. Thus, the term "Cultural Specialist for African American Families" was adopted.

### THE ROLE OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN SPECIALIST

The Cultural Specialist for African-American Families will play an integral role through consultation support to the caseworker and the community. The Cultural Specialist will help the caseworkers to mobilize resources and gain deeper insights into the cultural factors that influence the progression of case plans. In addition, the specialist will assist in addressing problems with clients that may be related to cultural differences between the worker and the client, and to generally, assist other workers in developing insights into better relating to clients of African descent.

### **CRITERIA DEVELOPMENT**

Following the model of the Department of Public Health, it was decided that staff who directly provide services to African American clients would be best qualified to develop the criteria and methodology for training, testing and evaluation of the Cultural Specialist Certification. To be considered for the Cultural Specialist In-Service Professional Development & Certification Training Program, Child Welfare Workers are required to complete a year of work or volunteer experience working with African American families and children, over the past two-year calendar period. The experience must provide the knowledge, skill and experience base to serve the African American community.<sup>2</sup>

### **DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINING**

"Cultural Training can increase productivity and build morale if it's handled correctly, but it can do severe damage, and even alienate employees, if it's not."

- Darcy De Leon, Hispanic Magazine

In tangent with its overall Cultural Diversity Program, the Family & Children Division, this program was designed to prepare interested Child Welfare Workers in becoming certified cultural specialists who will act as consultants to the Family and Children Services staff on various case management issues. The training would provide a minimal level of competency of the culture which could be used when working with the clients. The first phase of the certification program will focus on the African American Culture for which 45 hours of training was designed.<sup>3</sup>

Once enrolled the participants will be expected to complete the 45 hours of training, to pass a competency review, and then be placed on a roster to fill certified positions as they become available. Those persons not wishing to pursue certification can attend the training on a space available basis.

### **APPLICATION PHASE**

To apply for the Cultural Specialist In-Service Professional Development & Certification Program, interested child welfare workers who meet the minimum qualifications, must complete a certification application. The application is assessed for the knowledge, abilities and skills acquired which may qualify for the program. Applicant's response to specific questions designed in the application, are reviewed by the Cultural Specialist Committee. Each application is evaluated according to stan-

Refer to Entrance Requirements on Cultural Specialist Training and Certification Program (For African American Families)
 Befer to Cultural Specialist for African American Families for In-Service Professional Development & Certification Program

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Refer to Cultural Specialist for African American Families for In-Service Professional Development & Certification Program description.

dardized criteria developed by the Committee. Participants will be selected for the program based on a composite ratings given by each rater. This is not a Civil Service Examination.

### **CERTIFICATION PROCESS**

The certification process would be **inclusive.** All qualified employees could apply for the program. The Certification would be based on knowledge, skills, life and work experience and community involvement, not race or ethnicity.

### THE INCENTIVE

"You take people as far as they can go, not as far as you would like then to go." - Jeannette Rankin

While there is no monetary compensation, the incentive for the employee is that they have an opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills and use their experience in working with families and children of a specific culture. The training and certification received provides professional and personal development. The commitment to children and a strong belief of the system has motivated staff to participate.

### SUMMARY

"The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem...Here is not merely a nation, but a teeming nation of nations." Walt Whitman

As previously stated, the Cultural Specialist designation in the Department of Human Services was discussed in 1994. It has taken the Department almost four years to make the concept a reality. The commitment and support of the Executive Team inspired the hard work and dedication of the staff involved in the development of this designation. As previously described, many individuals were involved in the process. The teamwork and support has led to a Cultural Specialist for African American Families designation. Currently, only one position has been designated. However, the department is in process of looking into other cultural specialists certifications.

The committee commented that this was not an easy road. The commitment and determination kept them going. "This was indeed a partnership" commented Sheldon Martin, Chair to the Cultural Specialist Task Force. When asked if they could do things differently, what strategies would they change? They responded that they would get the labor organizations involved earlier on in the process. While labor supported the concept they initially had some concerns with how this process would work.

A total of 27 employees participated in the Cultural Specialist In-Service Professional Development & Certification Program. The number is indicative of the commitment of wanting to learn in order to continue to provide quality service. Of the 27, 9 were ultimately certified (7 African Americans; 1 White; and 1 Asian).

Knowledge of a culture can be learned either by being raised in that culture or in an academic or work setting. Yet for such learned cultural knowledge or skills to result in efficient service delivery to a particular ethnic group, its scope would have to be of significant detail. This scope can be gained through knowledge of the literature, history, philosophy, psychology, music, cultural pattern and/or

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Taken from a report written in 1998 for the Department of Public Health.

value systems of that culture, or, through experience working with people within that ethnic or racial group. $^4$ 

In order to make a program such as this successful, there must be continuous training offered to employees. Cultural competency is a lifelong learning experience. Staff cannot be expected to become experts in a few training sessions or classes. Learning must be continuous.

The San Francisco Department of Human Services is supportive of the Staff Development Department. The Cultural Specialist In-Service Professional Development & Certification Program is an expansion of continuous training that is being provided to Children & Family Services. The Department of Human Services mandates that staff participate in cultural competency training. This mandate fulfills compliance and program training requirements.

Funded by Title IV-E, the *Cultural Competency Training Series* is designed to provide staff training and provides skills, knowledge, and values that will enhance staff's cultural competency in public child welfare practices.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Cultural Specialist for African American Families is the first of its kind for the Department of Human Services, the Department will continue to hold a culturally sensitive philosophy. It hopes to expand the certification to other aspects of the program.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

Clearly **when there is a will - there is a way!** The Cultural Specialist Task Force, with the support of its Executive Team, was able to implement a process. While the committee is pleased and proud of their accomplishments, there are lessons to be learned. The advise for Alameda County if it chooses to pursue a similar concept is:

- Get labor involved early! Conduct informal meetings to address concept. Be prepared to address the issue regarding caseloads.
- Maintain a partnership with the stakeholders (Committee/CBO's/Title IV-E and Labor).
- Maintain small working meetings/committees; meet regularly.
- Maintain open communication; keep staff informed.
- Ensure that there is continued support from Executive Team.
- Provide updates to staff with correspondence from the Director.
- Allocate adequate funds to hire the trainers.
  "You get what you pay for!" Be flexible and reasonable when interviewing and hiring training consultants. You can draw from Title IV-E funds and/or allocate additional funding.
- Create an evaluation tool for quality assurance. This tool can be used along the way and again at the end of six to twelve months.

### IMPLICATIONS

"The County of Alameda Believes: **Diversity** is a positive, critical and essential ingredient of

 $<sup>^{5}</sup>$  Refer to Cultural Competency in Public Child Welfare Training Series brochure.

a successful work environment." -Diversity at Alameda County

Alameda County Social Services Agency has made some strides in the promotion of cultural diversity within its organization and recognizes its importance. Beginning with its Mission Statement "... recognizes the importance of family, cultural and ethnic diversity, and the increased populations at risk."

Furthermore, Social Services Agency has established an Agency Diversity Action Council; developed training entitled "Promoting Equality: Civil Rights in the Workplace"; and formed an African American Advisory Council in Children and Family Services. In addition, the Agency has appointed Dr. Abnor Boles to assist in the development of a Strategic Plan for Children and Family Services. In collaboration with the African American Advisory Council, Dr. Boles has initiated a race dialogue with Program Managers and staff.

A comprehensive plan for the Department of Children and Family Services has been developed to address issues facing the department today and the affects it has in the community. In this plan, Children and Family Services has identified "Cultural Competency" as one of its core values:

We value diversity and strive to be culturally competent by recognizing cultural and ethnic diversity within the community. We seek to expand our cultural knowledge, to adapt services to meet diverse needs, and to develop the capacity for cultural self assessment. We believe that services must be based on accurate perceptions of behavior and need, and that the attitudes, policies, practices and standards of the department and its staff be unbiased.<sup>6</sup>

One of the goals identified in the Comprehensive Plan is to **"Provide services that are culturally competent, comprehensive and flexible".** The objectives for this goal have been identified as follows:

- To promote a positive cross-cultural understanding, respect and appreciation for the various diverse populations within the community and the Agency.
- Strengthen the process for ongoing communication and dialogue among staff affirming cultural, ethnic, racial and linguistic identify.
- To enhance the cultural competency of the Children and Family Services Department staff by:
  - Explore the establishment of a Certification and/or Waiver process for staff with expertise in working with certain groups of children and families with an initial focus on African American Culture.
  - 2. Develop a training plan for the Children and Family Services Department and staff to expand knowledge and awareness of diverse cultures with an initial focus on African American Culture.7

<sup>6</sup> Taken from the Comprehensive Plan Department of Children and Family Services of Alameda County.

<sup>7</sup> Italic information reflects the concept is similar to information received from City & County of San Francisco. This is contained in the Alameda County Comprehensive Plan.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

"Each of us, whether we have children or not, is directly affected by how they are treated." Anonymous Child Advocate

Based on the strides made in San Francisco Department of Human Services and the efforts being made in Alameda County Social Services Agency, my overall recommendation is that the Comprehensive Plan as described under "Implications" be implemented. In doing so, I recommend Alameda County Social Services Agency consider the strategies used by San Francisco in implementing a similar program as well as review the lessons learned. Furthermore, the following is recommended:

- Reconvene the Diversity Action Council to address Agency-Wide issues related to cultural competency and diversity.
- Establish a Cultural Specialist Committee as a sub-committee of the African American Advisory Council.
- Invite as our guest, members of San Francisco's Cultural Specialist Committee to share their experience and tell us how the certification is currently working.
- Include in the Cultural Specialist Committee members of the: a) African American Council; b) Civil Rights Officer; c) Staff Development Specialist; d) Human Resources Representative.
- Cultural Competency efforts should not be isolated to Children and Family Services. Therefore, it further recommended that cultural competency efforts be implemented Agency-wide.

### and County of San Cancisco

### Der tment of Human Services

Michael S. Wald Executive Director

Deputy Directors Sally Kipper Pat Reynolds John R. Vera

### DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

### ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

### CULTURAL SPECIALIST TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM (For African American Families)

An applicant or DSS employee seeking to qualify for a Child Welfare African American Specialist certification must have 1000 hours of verifiable experience or training in the provision of services to African American clients. The 1000 hours of experience or training must be within the last two years and have provided for the aquisition of knowledge and/or skills in one or more of the following areas:

Specialized communication skills that are culturally relevant and particularly effective in working with African-American clients. Effective and realistic interviewing techniques that get results in helping African-American Clients meet the requirements of laws, policies, and procedures for child welfare services.

Knowledge of appropriate mental health, parenting, substance abuse, and educational services and facilities that are culturally targeted for African American clients. Ability to maximize the clients' utilization of these services in order to meet case plan requirements and for their own benefit.

Ability to assess the effectiveness of case plans as they relate to the unique problems of the African American client population and make recommendations for the effective provision of services.

Knowledge of African-American history and cultural values and how they influence the belief systems and lifestyles of this client group. Knowledge of the systemic issues that African American clients face in seeking services from Social Welfare agencies.

Effective Case Management and Crisis intervention techniques for African-American clients at risk of child abuse and neglect. Ability to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and make adjustments as necessary for the effective progression of the case plan.



### RATIONALE

The African American Cultural Specialist (AACS) In-Service Professional Developmental and Certification Program has been developed in order to foster an in-depth understanding of the African American culture among Family and Children Services (FCS) staff who work directly with African American families and children. Culture is inclusive of social heritage, institutions, customs, skills, humanistic values, arts, resilience, education and belief systems.

Currently, approximately 65% of the children in San Francisco foster care are African American. The Department has increased its commitment to aily Preservation, and recognizes that internal changes are necessary to

reduce the number of African American children in foster care.

### DEVELOPMENT

Following establishment of the AACS by the Department of Health and in response to recommendations made by the Cultural Competency and Language Waiver Task Force, the Department formed the AACS Committee. This committee developed a curriculum for interested staff members to complete in order to be certified as an AACS. Members of this task force included interested FCS line workers, supervisors, DHS personnel analyst, and the DHS Affirmative Action Coordinator. The FCS Training Officer served as an on-going consultant.

## ROLE OF THE AACS

The Department of Human Services' initial goal is to establish at least one lition which carries the requirement of certification as an AACS. The AACS would carry regular work responsibilities in addition to consultative responsibilities as requested by other FCS workers who require assistance in working with African American families or children. There is no monetary compensation for this role.

# QUALIFICATION TO APPLY

Child Welfare Workers must have completed a year of work or volunteer experience working with African American families and children, over the past two-year calendar period. Additional details and application are available from the Exam Unit (557-5573).

# CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

Certification as an AACS will occur when the individual completes part A and part B :

Part A. 45 hours of training prescribed as follows:

- 1. 10 hours of "Historical Perspectives"
- 2. 10 hours of "Characteristics of the African American Culture"
- 3. 10 hours of "Family Dynamics"
- 4. 10 hours of "Issues of Child Welfare and Services"
- 5. 5 hours of "Consultation"

Individuals may choose to complete some of their training or education in a medium other than through the Division's Training Program. The AACS Review Committee will make the final decision as to what outside courses or trainings may be substituted for specific curriculum requirements. Staff members who complete these curriculum requirements will be awarded a certificate of completion of AACS training. This will then qualify them to participate in the exam process outlined in part B below.

**Part B.** Successful completion of an oral exam to be given by a panel of trainers, consultants, or specialists not employed by DHS. Prerequisite: Completion of Part A.

# PARTICIPATION IN TRAININGS

Priority for registration for any specific training will be given to AACS candidates registered in the certification program. All of the courses will also be open to other FCS staff members to satisfy Division requirements, personal interest, or professional development. Some courses will be opened to representatives of eligible Community-based organizations, as determined by the Division's Training Program.

## STEPS IN REVIEW

- 1. Meet minimum qualifications
- 2. Complete 45 hours of training
- 3. Complete and submit supplemental application to qualify for exam
- 4. Eligible candidates participate in oral exam process
- 5. Selection of candidate awarded AACS status

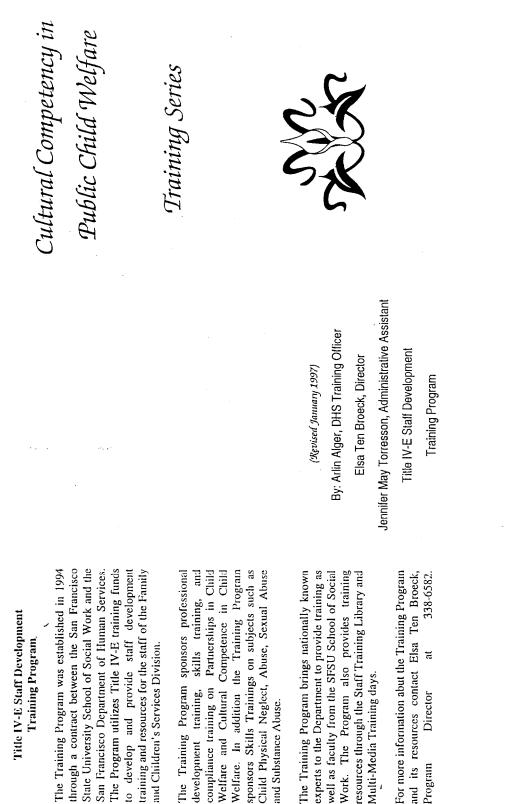
Title IV-E Staff Development Training Program

The Training Program was established in 1994 through a contract between the San Francisco State University School of Social Work and the San Francisco Department of Human Services. The Program utilizes Title IV-E training funds to develop and provide staff development training and resources for the staff of the Family and Children's Services Division.

The Training Program sponsors professional development training, skills training, and compliance training on Partnerships in Child Welfare and Cultural Competence in Child Welfare. In addition the Training Program sponsors Skills Trainings on subjects such as Child Physical Neglect, Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Substance Abuse.

The Training Program brings nationally known experts, as well as faculty from the SFSU School of Social Work, to the Department to provide training. The Program also provides resources through the Staff Training Library and Multi-Media Training days.

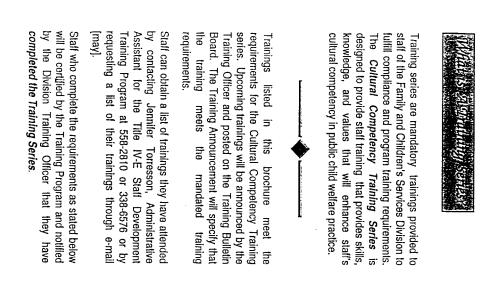
Por more information about the Training Program and its resources contact Elsa Ten Broeck, Program Director, at 338-6582.



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Program





Requirements for The Cultural Competency Training Series are the completion of the core course, "Introduction to Cultural Competency"; the completion of one elective from the Diversity Awareness courses; and the completion of five electives from the Cultural Specific courses described below. Training Series requirements are to be completed by June 30, 1998 (or three years from the date of permanent status for staff hired after July, 1994).



Core Course:

C701 = "Introduction to Cultural Competence"

Jerry Tello 4/3/96, 5/14/96, 5/21/96, 5/22/96, 6/4/96, 7/9/96, 8/20/96, 8/21/96, 10/16/96

**Diversity Awareness Courses:** 

- C706 = "Thinking Cross Culturally During Assessment and Case Planning" Eliana Cil Mac
- Assessment and Case Planning" Eliana Gil 4/30/96 C704 = "Healing Across Cultures" Terry Tatoya 3/13/96
- C705 = "Foster Families and Culture: The Hidden Dilemma" Jorja Prover 3/21/96
- C702 = "Cultural Competency Video Training" 10/24/95

### **Cultural Specific Elective Courses:**

- 1. "Cultural Competence with African American Families"
- C710 = African American Child Rearing. Gil Lopez 8/23/95
- C711 = African American Video Training 10/24/95
  CR31 = "Effective Wave to Provide Services to Africa
- C831 = "Effective Ways to Provide Services to African American Kinship Providers" 1/23/97

2. "Cultural Competence with Latino Families"

- **C730** = Cultural Competence with Latino Families: Jerry Tello 6/7/95, 10/19/95
- C731 = Cultural Competence in Working With the Latino Families Advanced Training. Jerry Tello 10/19/95

"Cultural Competence with Asian Families"

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- C720 = Ways to Work Effectively with Asian Families: Asian Perinatal Services 6/22/95, 1/24/96 C860 = Effective Interventions with Asian Families:
- *C860 = Effective Interventions with Asian Families:* Wu Yee Child Care Center 11/12/96
- 4. "Cultural Competence with Native American
- Families" C741 = "Native American Culture" Terry Tafoya 3/14/96
- C740 = "Indian Child Welfare Act" Pat Guillory 2/14/96, 12/4/96
- "Cultural Competence with Gay and Lesbian

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Families" C750 = "Issues Facing Gay and Lesblan Youth in Outof-Home Care" 2/18/97