

DIVERSITY: SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCIES — THE WAY OF DOING BUSINESS

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Introduction

State, federal, and local mandates have required public social services agencies to provide equal access of services to all clients regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, political affiliation, marital status, sex, sexual identity, age, and disability. However, beyond legal mandates, today public agencies recognize the need to effectively respond to the needs of the community.

Current and future demographic trends indicate that the communities are diverse, and in order to meet the needs of the community, public agencies need to incorporate diversity into the way of doing business. What does an organization that has incorporated diversity into its way of doing business look like? According to Bailey Jackson and Rita Hardiman ("Organizational Stages of Multicultural Awareness", 1981), this organization would:

1. Reflect the contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, operations, and service delivery.
2. Be committed to the eradication of social oppression in all forms within the organization.
3. Be sensitive to the possible violation of the interests of all cultural and social groups whether or not they are represented in the organization.
4. Have members of diverse cultural and social groups in full participation at all levels of the organization, especially in those areas where decisions are made that shape the organization.

What are some questions which need to be addressed to determine if agencies are developing a diversity plan which is inclusive of all cultures:

1. Is the agency providing equal access of department's services to all individuals, such as individuals who have no or limited English language skills and individuals with disabilities?
 - Is there an established department procedure on how to effectively serve nonEnglish speaking monolingual clients or clients with disabilities?
 - Are forms, letters, and notices provided in the client's primary language or alternate format?
 - Is there sufficient bilingual staff to meet the needs of the non-English speaking clients?
 - Is staff trained to adequately serve clients with physical and/or mental disabilities?
 - Is there sufficient staff employed with adequate experience, knowledge, skills, and training who are qualified to provide culturally relevant services to clients?

2. Does the agency routinely elicit input from clients and community agencies regarding what service needs are and how the agency can better meet those needs?
 - Are meetings routinely held with community agencies?
 - What methods are used to elicit direct client input?
 - Are clients' complaints really listened to and responded to?
 - Is planning a flexible process which focuses on the needs of the community and clients?
3. What are the agency's practices in hiring and promoting diverse staff?
 - Is employment outreach being conducted in all communities?
 - Are hiring and promotional opportunities being monitored to insure representation of client population?
 - Are training opportunities provided to all employees?
 - Are promotional/mentorship opportunities being provided for all employees?
4. What are the agency's practices in addressing employees' issues and concerns?
 - What steps are taken to insure that employees concerns are heard and responded to?
 - Are employees' conflicts being responded to timely and adequately by management staff?
 - Are the different avenues of complaints made known and easily accessible to employees?
 - Are employees' conflicts being fairly settled and with the awareness that cultural barriers may be the source of communication problems?

San Francisco Department of Social Services (SFDSS) - Alameda County Social Services Agency (Alameda County SSA)

San Francisco Department of Social Services (SFDSS) has a diverse workforce, and the clients it serves are just as diverse. There has been a history of work place conflicts based on cultural and racial differences, issues of HIV/AIDS, between different work groups. At the same time, the community has voiced concerns that the department was not providing culturally sensitive services to the clients.

In order to address these issues, the department began to look at how it operates in terms of the work force it employs and the clients it serves. There was recognition and acknowledgment of the need to develop a comprehensive approach to address the diversity issues of the department. Some steps taken in this direction are:

- Supervisory training to help line managers better manage employees,
- Development of African-American and Bilingual Waiver Task Force,
- Diversity training for all staff.

My goal is to help the department develop an effective comprehensive plan to address and

manage diversity issues. In order to do this, I felt that it was important that a broader perspective be obtained by working with Alameda County Social Services Agency (SSA) to learn of their experiences in addressing diversity issues and the delivery of services to an ethnically diverse community.

[Refer to Attachments 1 and 2 for an overview of SFDSS and Alameda SSA workforce and client population information.]

Alameda County Diversity Plan - An Historical Overview

The need to address the needs of the diverse community of Alameda County has been a countywide issue. A brief overview:

In 1979, there were complaints regarding the lack of Spanish bilingual services at Highland Hospital in Oakland. These complaints were brought by community groups to the Board of Supervisors. There was also a federal civil rights investigation of the lack of bilingual services at the hospital. As a result, a translation office was established at the hospital to provide Spanish and Chinese bilingual services. Subsequently, additional Southeast Asian languages were included.

The Board of Supervisors established a Multi-Cultural/Multi-Lingual Task Force to address diversity issues on a countywide level. Some of the accomplishments of this Task Force were:

1. Diversity Leadership Conference: Building Public and Private Partnerships to Better Serve Our Multicultural Communities - April 1992

Conference for all managers and directors of different city departments covering ethnic diversity issues, restructuring to meet needs, "glass ceiling" issues, and creating partnerships.
2. Educational Forums
 - Forums regarding different topics, such as the significance of Malcolm X, Japan bashing and violence against Asians, Rodney King trial, Mid-Eastern communities.
3. Newsletter addressing multicultural issues
4. Bilingual Earthquake Preparedness Material
 - Helped in establishing bilingual services for victims of the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake.
5. Leadership and Planning Conference: "Diversity" - February & April 1993
 - Diversity consultant hired to design and lead in the implementation of countywide program.

- Workshop and planning sessions covering managing diversity and valuing differences, personal leadership and diversity, cultural values in action, and personal and organizational action plans.
 - Formation of Diversity Departmental Development Committee consisting of six agency/department heads, County Administrator, County Diversity Programs Manager, County Training Officer.
 - Development of countywide diversity policy.
6. Adoption of Countywide Diversity Program Policy by Board of Supervisors – December 1993.
- To promote an organization where groups, as well as individuals, are appreciated for their differences; where everyone understands and appreciates the heritage and culture of many different groups, as well as being responsive to the uniqueness of each individual. Where individuals reach beyond their own experience to appreciate and work effectively with people who are different from themselves.
7. Implementation of Countywide Diversity Program

The countywide implementation of diversity program is in progress. The various phases are:

- 1) One day preview of diversity training, "Diversity: Our Framework for Excellence" Workshop for agency/department heads and upper managers.
- 2) County diversity strategic plan and mission and credo revision, pilot program:
 - Six departments: Auditor's Agency, District Attorney, County Counsel, Social Services, Sheriff's, Superior Court.
 - Strategic planning sessions for agency directors, workshops for all managers and employees, survey of need - diversity issues, plans for change based on survey results.
- 3) Countywide implementation
 - One day preview workshops to upper managers whose departments are not participating in the pilot program, phasing in of other county departments to training and strategic planning, integration of diversity content into existing leadership and employee development training programs, development of a Diversity Council county-wide and within each agency.

Currently, the diversity training program for departments in the pilot program is almost completed. These departments are beginning the work of addressing the diversity issues, based on the survey results, and developing the diversity action councils. The diversity training will continue to roll out to other county departments. Each department will also be developing their own diversity plan.

Alameda County Social Services Agency (SSA) Diversity Plan

Alameda County SSA Mission:

To promote the social and economic well-being of individuals and families in Alameda County through a responsive, accessible, and flexible service delivery system that recognizes the importance of the family, cultural and ethnic diversity, and the increased vulnerability of populations at risk.

In response to the Deloitte and Touche Performance Audit, SSA has adopted longrange goals as part of their Strategic Plan to meet the goals of the mission.

Two of the goals addressed the issues of diversity:

1. Provide culturally competent, efficient and effective, client-centered services.
2. Promote and Manage Diversity.

Six month objectives established to work towards these goals were to:

1. Develop a draft strategic plan for managing and promoting diversity.
2. Meet with the employee labor groups to discuss the role and membership of the Diversity Action Team.
3. Establish an agency-wide representative Diversity Action Team to review and advise the proposed strategic plan and general diversity issues.
4. Recommend the strategic plan to the Executive Committee.

Working in tandem to the long-range goals identified by SSA was the county-wide diversity training and planning. Therefore, the two separate but similar programs and planning were coordinated and essentially merged into one - the agency's diversity strategic plan. The plan for managing and promoting diversity includes the following programs and projects:

1. Diversity Action Council (DAC) - Proposed Plans
The goal of the council is to develop and implement the strategic plan.
Membership: 15 members
 - Representatives of the agency's employees to include ethnic, gender, management, line staff, employees labor groups.
 - Members must have experience, ability, and be committed to team building and to promote harmony in the workplace.

- Members will be selected by joint committee of Executive Committee, Human Resources Director, Multicultural/Multilingual Coordinator, Affirmative Action/Civil Rights Officer and union representatives.

2. Training beyond basic cultural diversity awareness

The cultural diversity awareness training served as an introduction to diversity concepts, such as individual responsibilities to increase understanding and awareness of bias, stereotypes, prejudice, the need to be open to changes and improve communication, and the importance of individual's actions to take positive steps to manage diversity. The goal is to continue and expand training beyond the basic county-wide diversity training. The plans are to develop a multicultural awareness curriculum. The format of the curriculum is educational forums, which would focus in depth on different diversity issues based on current issues of the community. Some proposed topics include:

- The African-American Family and Welfare Reform.
- Undocumented Immigrants.
- The Challenge to Affirmative Action and the Erosion of Civil Rights.
- Southeast Asians and Assimilation.
- Middle-Easterners: The Invisible Community.
- The Status of African-American Males.

Enrollment would be limited to 50 officially registered "students" with invitations extended to all interested staff.

- In order to receive "credit" for participating, students must attend seven of eight sessions. Students will be awarded a Certificate of Completion and will be invited to participate in planning the curriculum for the next year. It is expected that subsequent curricula will change depending on the interest of topics.

3. Peer Mediation Project

- The goal is to create a team of employees trained in conflict resolution and proactive communication skills to act as facilitators to mediate disputes.
- The intent is to provide an in-house resource for staff to seek guidance/advice on resolving conflicts, to identify, negotiate and resolve issues that do not have to become a formal complaint, and to address problems that appear to be based on inter-cultural misunderstanding and assist in the resolution of such issues.

Membership - Selection of 16 employees, who will be provided training in mediation skills.

4. Recruitment Plan

- Publication of a Recruitment Directory to assist with the need to advertise SSA jobs more broadly to expand and enhance minority recruitment.

- Formation of diversity recruitment teams to provide direct outreach to multicultural communities.
5. Bilingual Directory
- The goal is to develop a directory of bilingual employees in order to identify the various languages spoken by SSA employees. This is to facilitate translation services and to guide in the deployment of personnel.

Accomplishments To. Date

1. The Alameda Social Services Agency Diversity Management Plan has been drafted.
2. The majority of the employees have completed the county-wide diversity training.
 - The staffs reaction to the training has been varied. Some employees felt that management needed to take the lead in initiating changes and that it was difficult to really focus on the training when their basic working conditions were so poor. Some employees felt training did not address the real diversity issues of the agency.
3. The meeting with employees labor organizations has occurred, and labor is in support of the diversity plan and the Diversity Action Council.
 - One of the major delay in the diversity planning was the inability to meet with the labor organizations because mediation was in progress.
4. The core group to plan for the Diversity Action Council has begun meeting, and regular monthly meetings have been scheduled.
5. An Affirmative Action Forum is being planned and will occur within the next the next month.
 - Plans are for San Francisco DSS and Alameda County SSA to jointly plan this forum between the two departments and to perhaps expand participation to other city departments.
6. Planning for the training on mediation has started and will be finalized within the two months.
 - Plans are to share resources for this training.
7. The Diversity Recruitment Directory is ninety percent completed and will be ready for publication in the next two months.
 - Plan is for Alameda County SSA to share this directory with San Francisco DSS, since information does cover the San Francisco Bay Area.

Application of Alameda County SSA's Diversity Plans to SFDSS

The work and accomplishments of Alameda County SSA are most applicable to the diversity planning currently in progress in SFDSS.

The similarities between the two agencies are:

- Commitment to incorporate diversity into the way agencies do business in recognizing the diverse work force and the diversity of the client population and the need to meet the specific service needs of that diverse client population.
- Providing similar type of basic diversity training to lay the foundation for addressing diverse composition of the work force and the need to effectively manage and value that diversity issues.
- Establishment of a Diversity Task Force to develop the department's comprehensive long range diversity plan.

As the work continues in diversity planning and in incorporating diversity into the agencies, one must continue to monitor the progress by asking:

1. Is the agency providing equal access of department's services to all individuals?
2. Does the agency routinely elicit input from clients and community agencies?
3. What are the agency's practices in recruiting, hiring, and promoting diverse staff?
4. What are the agency's practices in addressing all employee's issues and concerns?

A comprehensive diversity plan is an on-going long term commitment to address the needs of meeting the needs of the diverse client served by the agency, as well as the agency's diverse staff who provides the service. The diversity mission is not merely to meet legal mandates of nondiscrimination and/or affirmative action but a sincere commitment to provide effective, efficient, culturally relevant services to clients.

The incorporation of diversity into agencies is not easy, it is very much a part of organizational change. It will require time, flexible planning, and commitment in order to overcome resistance and barriers.

It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach to diversity planning. What is important and will continue to be important, especially in the view of the current political climate of affirmative action being challenged, budget cutbacks, and right-sizing of public social services agencies, priority continues to be given to diversity and the importance that this is indeed an integral part of how public social services must operate in order to do better with less.

Percent (%) Distribution of SFDSS and Alameda SSA Staff by Job Category

		White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Filipino	Native American	Male	Female
Officials	San Francisco	71.4	9.5	4.8	9.5	4.8	0.0	47.6	52.4
	Alameda	60.0	28.6	2.9	8.6	0.0	0.0	17.1	82.9
Professionals	San Francisco	56.4	16.7	10.5	11.3	4.5	0.6	37.1	62.9
	Alameda	61.1	20.4	8.6	8.6	0.9	0.2	26.2	73.8
Technicians	San Francisco	22.2	20.8	14.2	19.9	22.7	0.2	35.8	64.2
	Alameda	17.6	44.7	19.1	12.1	5.6	0.4	19.5	80.5
Paraprofessionals	San Francisco	33.3	33.3	0.0	0.0	33.3	0.0	33.3	66.7
	Alameda	9.1	54.5	0.0	18.2	18.2	0.0	45.5	54.5
Clerical	San Francisco	17.6	14.9	11.1	27.0	29.4	0.0	28.4	71.6
	Alameda	20.7	34.1	12.5	11.3	20.7	0.2	14.4	85.6
Service	San Francisco	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
	Alameda	50.0	30.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	50.0	50.0

Percent (%) Distribution of SFDSS and Alameda SSA Client Population by Ethnicity

		White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Filipino	Native American	Other
AFDC	San Francisco	15.5	40.2	18.4	22.4	2.8	0.2	n/a
	Alameda	15.5	52.4	14.6	12.5	1.0	0.4	3.6
Medi-Cal	San Francisco	22.4	14.0	28.6	27.3	7.4	0.1	n/a
	Alameda	22.4	20.1	29.8	19.1	5.1	0.2	2.6
NA Food Stamps	San Francisco	35.6	42.1	10.8	7.8	2.6	1.0	n/a
	Alameda	23.4	48.1	17.9	7.1	1.8	0.4	1.3
General Assistance	San Francisco	32.8	42.8	10.0	9.7	3.3	0.0	n/a
	Alameda	12.7	69.6	5.3	9.2	0.7	0.4	2.1
Foster Care	San Francisco	11.1	74.5	8.5	3.8	1.0	0.7	n/a
	Alameda	15.5	75.1	7.0	1.3	0.4	0.4	0.3
Adult Services	San Francisco	36.9	23.7	11.4	22.7	5.0	0.3	n/a
	Alameda	29.0	49.1	7.7	10.6	2.5	0.2	0.9
Employment & Training Services								
GAIN	San Francisco	6.1	49.6	16.5	25.9	0.02	0.0	n/a
	Alameda	13.9	68.7	9.9	4.5	0.8	0.3	1.8
GATES	San Francisco	27.0	62.4	0.1	2.3	0.02	0.1	n/a
	Alameda	12.0	71.4	5.2	8.3	0.4	0.6	0.0
Family Children Svcs.	San Francisco	10.1	69.0	12.9	3.8	2.0	1.3	2.0
	Alameda	Statistics for Family & Children Services not available						