

## Executive Summary

### Eliminating Racial Disproportionalities and Disparities: Courageous Conversation

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Course Description: Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparities (ERDD): Courageous Conversations is designed as a two-part Institute or comprehensive training designed to guide ERDD work in public institutions. The *ERDD Institute* is designed as an advanced training program for line staff, supervisors, managers, administrators, trainers and staff development personnel who wish to have an active role in leading the efforts to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparity (ERDD) within their agencies. The focus of the Institute is to help agencies build capacity to impact negative outcomes by developing staff expertise required to lead the ERDD efforts. Instead of traditional transfer of learning methodologies in which the transfer of knowledge is “individualized” to the participant, the Institute trains the participant/practitioner to see how their personal transformation has direct and immediate application to the agency or site. Institute participants/practitioners become the internal experts for building the capacity of their agencies to impact attitudes, practices and policy applications that can reduce bias at decision-points and develop service responses that better meet the needs of families of color.

Institute Objectives: The objective of the Institute is to provide intensive advanced training through which participants learn the skills to work within their agencies to identify address and deter inequities at each decision-making point. The Institute will expose participants to the latest theories and research on race, social justice and institutional bias in child welfare. The assumption is that agency practitioners are uniquely positioned to provide the expertise needed to address ERDD challenges of their respective cities. Participants will learn how to apply social justice theories and informed practice to systems within their agencies that can lead to substantive change. Participants will learn a wide range of skills including problem analysis, curriculum development, strategies for delivering difficult dialogue, critical thinking skills, facilitation skills, organizational change strategies and policy application.

Each child welfare jurisdiction needs to have the capacity to sustain ongoing efforts to eliminate disproportionality and disparities. ERDD efforts will only be effective when the tools and strategies are integrated into the agency through routine practices of line staff through management.

The course will be interactive through the use of lecture, discussions, films and vignettes, and small group work. There will be a small out-of class assignment to be completed prior to Part II.

The Institute is based on three compelling presumptions that: (1) bias can influence decision making in child welfare (2) that racial biases are built into the structure of the agency in ways that contribute to disproportionality and disparities and (3) that ERDD must involve competency in crucial conversations if individuals are to intervene in sensitive practices, policies and agency culture that invariably contribute to disproportionality and disparities.

As a result of the ERDD Institute on Crucial Conversations each participant will achieve the following general competencies:

1. Identify unique ERDD challenges faced by her/his agency/county.
2. Develop and demonstrate skills and capacity to address ERDD challenges.
3. Refine mentoring and coaching skills for addressing ERDD challenges.
4. Identify a network of change agents who can be the source of information problem solving and support for the desired change.
5. Meet with a key decision-maker within the agency/county to develop and implement an action plan related to ERDD efforts.

As a result of the ERDD Institute on Crucial Conversations each participant will achieve the following specific competencies in Crucial Conversations:

1. Develop effective change strategies that promote participant skills and expertise in courageous conversations to enhance interpersonal, inter-agency and intra-agency dialogue.
2. Ability to have honest, respectful and authentic conversations about race, culture, social class and gender.
3. Promote skillful and intentional communications between individuals to identify and influence agency dynamics that might inadvertently contribute to racial disproportionality and disparities.

This ERDD Institute on Crucial Conversations will improve the interaction between agency staff and families as well as improve interpersonal interactions and communications within unit and staff meetings between peer colleagues and in supervisory settings. Anyone interested in taking a leadership role in ERDD efforts is encouraged to attend this Institute.

## General Training Outline

### ERDD Institute on Crucial Conversations

By Rita Cameron Wedding Ph.D.

#### I. History of Child Welfare: Impact on Racial Dialogue

History will be examined to extract values, assumptions and dynamics of power and culture which influence our thinking, language and approach to the question of race.

#### II. Theory: Courageous Conversations Challenges

What constitutes a *Courageous Conversation*? The following issues will be explored.

Managing the emotional content of a conversation and still accomplishing work goals; managing inter-cultural conflict; developing intervention strategies for courageous conversations, moving words to action, and the power and persuasion of courageous conversations.

#### III. Depending upon participant interest in staff development some attention will be paid to resources, strategies and exercises that support crucial conversations in the training room.

#### IV. Practicum

This session focuses on managing the common obstacles to a productive conversation about disparities and disproportionality. Using experimental exercises and vignettes, participants will improve their ability to identify and increase their own and staff skills in talking about the role of race in the delivery of child welfare services.

#### V. Transfer of Learning: Integrating Theory into Practice

Capacity building efforts-working within the agency to promote substantive change. Developing, applying, documenting and integrating “best practice” strategies.