The Strength And Power Of DIVERSITY
What is Diversity?

- Different work styles
- Racial differences
- Ethnic differences
- Age span
- Social class
- Regional differences
- Sexual Minority
- Religion
- Political affiliation
- Skills
- Abilities/Disabilities
Demographics

- The U.S. is becoming an increasingly diverse society
- This diversity means that many different cultures operate in our communities and neighborhoods
- The youth and families we work with represent an amazing array of diversity and cultural richness

Decker, Decker & Brown, 2007
14% of the total U.S. population speak a language other than English at home.

54% of those speak Spanish.
Why is Cultural Diversity an Important Issue?

The U.S. is becoming a multicultural Society:

- **By 2040** no race will make up a majority

- **By 2050:**
  - The U.S. African American population will increase from 13% to 14%
  - The Hispanic population will increase from 14% to 25%.
  - The Caucasian population will decrease from 74% to 50%.
  - The Asian population will increase from 3% to 8%.

National Association of State Boards of Education, 2002
Definitions That Assist In Establishing Common Ground

**Race**
- One of four groups: White; Black; American Indian and Alaska Native; and Asian and Pacific Islander (US Census, 2000).

**Ethnicity**
- Selected cultural and sometimes physical characteristics used to classify people into ethnic groups or categories. American ethnic groups include Native Americans, Hispanics, Indians, Latinos, Chinese, African Americans, European Americans and so on (O’Neil, 2004).
What is Culture?

The integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communication styles, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions to ensure that the needs of the children, youth and families are met within the context of their culturally informed world view.

**CULTURE:**

- Organizes our physical and social interaction
- Forms our Identity
- Shapes our Understanding and Perceptions
- Organizes our physical and social interaction
Why Culture Matters

It affects…

- Parenting and child rearing
- Communication
- Body language
- Perception of time
- Help-seeking behaviors; help-giving behaviors; stigma
- Attitudes and beliefs about the law, services, social support, kinship support, and what constitutes successful services
- Use of services and social supports
- Understanding of government systems
- How we see the world

The Strengths of Cultural Diversity

- Offers an environment of inclusion, that is supportive and collaborative and increases productivity and loyalty.
- Promotes equity and equal opportunity.
- Encourages interaction among diverse people to enrich the educational experience, promote personal growth and enhance the community.
- Fosters mutual respect, value differences and promotes cross cultural understanding.
- Prepares community members to live and work in a competitive global economy.
Don’t Assume!

• The assumptions we make based on a person’s appearance often lead to misjudgments.

• We may not “hear” what youth and families have to say because we have already decided that they have nothing to contribute based on our own biases relating to the person’s appearance or situation.

• Our preconceptions may adversely affect our ability to communicate effectively with those who are different from us.
Labeling

• We often use labels or categories to describe others.
• These labels can be based on such characteristics as clothing, looks, the way a person talks, or the groups to which he or she belongs.
• Grouping is a natural human inclination; however, people often make assumptions about groups of people they don’t even know.
Stereotyping

Preconceptions and Stereotypes function as negative lenses through which people perceive others who look, think, or behave differently.

- **Stereotyping occurs when we use misinformation to judge everyone who belongs to a specific group.**
  For example, if we are walking through a park late at night and encounter three senior citizens wearing fur coats and walking with canes, we may not feel as threatened as if we were met by three high school-aged boys wearing leather jackets. Why is this so? Because we have made a generalization in each case.

- **Stereotypes also evolve out of fear of persons from minority groups**

(Grobman, G. 1990)
Things to Remember…

• Acknowledge the existence of your own preconceptions.
• Be critical of yourself. Don't take for granted any opinion that pops into your head.
• Work to understand how your preconceptions impact the way you view others.
• Know your labels and to whom you relegate them.
• Slow down and get more information.
Harassment

• Harassment is...
  – Unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or genetic information.
  – Unlawful where...
    • Enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment. Or the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive.
  – Offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or picture, and interference with work performance.