

## Tips for Getting to Know the Communities You Serve: A Guide for IPS Programs and Steering Committees

Based on a Presentation by Darius McKinney and Emery Cowan

*IPS specialists are more effective if they are viewed as community stakeholders, rather than an outsider coming in with resources.*

- ④ Look at census data for the county or city that you serve. Take data to your steering committee. Talk to agency leaders, “Have we thought about reaching out to this community?”
  - Some cultures may be less comfortable receiving mental health treatment. But an individual may be interested in assistance with a job or career, and as they develop a trusting relationship with an IPS specialist, they may also be willing to consider mental health treatment.
- ④ Have written materials in different languages.
- ④ Hire staff who reflect the community served.
- ④ Learn about different cultures in the community you serve—what holidays are celebrated? What are their successes? Be curious and educate yourself about the culture and the community ahead of time – you will not know it all, but you can learn some helpful information.
- ④ During IPS planning meetings, Indigenous People have pointed out that “stakeholder” can have negative connotations to many Indigenous Peoples in the U.S. When land acquisition was happening, this term referred to the allotment of land to settlers. Settlers were given wooden stakes to claim their plot of land prior to any treaty or land negotiations with Indigenous Peoples. It is more appropriate to refer to Indigenous Peoples as partners rather than stakeholders
- ④ Know about the different memorials and landmarks in the area. Where is the post office, library, police station, fire station, and chamber of commerce?
- ④ Attend festivals.
  - Examples include Pride Parades, Juneteenth events, or a Chinese New Year’s celebration. Another example is that Chicago has a Welcome Back to School even that is attended by local politicians and local leaders.
  - Be more than an attendee. Volunteer to help with the festival or buy table space. Being involved in the event will help you meet area leaders.
  - Be friendly. Talk to people.

- ② Go to community meetings chaired by City Council Members. After the meeting, wait for an opportunity to shake hands with the Council Person and introduce yourself.
- ② Visit community centers. Find out what is going on there.
- ② Build Trust:
  - Never over promise
  - Learn about your own biases and blind spots
  - Know that you hold power and privilege
  - It's okay to say "I didn't know that. Thanks." Let people know that you want to learn about the community.
- ② Employers. When you meet employers, ask what they do to participate in the community. That will give you ideas about good ways to participate, and it will also help you learn which employers are allies.
- ② Show that you care about the community and feel safe there. Express your desire to see the community grow and prosper.

Your Ideas for Connecting with Community Members:

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