

Diversity Awareness & Understanding



- Increase your diversity competence
- Serve customers more effectively
- Interact with neighbors and workers
- Compete in the Global Marketplace

Macomb County
Defining Business + Life

Introduction

Macomb County's population is becoming more diverse. This rise in diversity poses many opportunities and challenges for our businesses and communities. We as a County must begin to take the steps to better understand our diversity and utilize our uniqueness in order to benefit each of us. In this environment it is important to be able to communicate effectively with each other. From our businesses developing new methods to access the global marketplace, to our communities welcoming and understanding the needs of their diverse populations, we can all take the steps to understand the diverse cultures and ethnicities throughout Macomb County. If we work together we can establish stronger relationships that foster trust and respect in our businesses and communities.

Exploring Diversity

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

Exploring Culture

A common way of understanding culture is to see it as consisting of four elements (values, norms, institutions, artifacts) that are "passed on from generation to generation by learning alone". Values comprise ideas about what in life seems important. They guide the rest of the culture. Norms consist of expectations of how people will behave. Institutions are the structures of a society within which values and norms are transmitted. Artifacts—things, or aspects of material culture—derive from a culture's values and norms.

Diversity Competence

Each of us has the ability to focus on four key areas to develop diversity competence: awareness, knowledge, skills and actions.

Awareness

- Respect the benefits of diverse values and behaviors for your community and business.
- Recognize the way in which you stereotype, judge and discriminate people of other cultures.
- Notice the similarities that are shared across most cultures: desire for safety, good health, education and well being of our families.

Knowledge

- Learn factual information about other cultures.
- Attend a cultural event, or celebration that you have never experienced before.

Skills

- Take personal responsibility for the way you respond to cultural differences.
- Actively listen to others to recognize and appreciate other ways to look at the world.

Action

- Show more patience when working and interacting with people who have different learning styles than you.
- Make continued and sincere attempts to understand the world from others' points of view.

Developing diversity competence is not simple. Overcoming stereotypes and learning about others' beliefs and values can be a challenge. Diversity competence is a journey that once started can lead to a broader, more culturally enriched "understanding" of each other. When practiced, diversity competence can lead us to better communication, more rewarding personal and professional relationships and a better understanding of ourselves.

Culture and You

Our beliefs and values are largely set by our families at a young age, but continue to be shaped by our life experiences and interactions with others. Our cultural programming has a direct impact on how we approach and interact with others.



Stereotypes

In all groups of people cultural programming can lead to the development of stereotypes. Most often stereotypes are defined as negative conceptions, opinions or images attributed to a group or culture of other people. To reduce the negative impacts stereotypes can have on our personal and business relationships we must work to develop our own diversity competence.

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding diversity and its impact on Macomb County please feel free to contact the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development at (586) 469-5285.



Department of
Planning &
Economic
Development

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Resources Materials

The content in this publication was sourced from: Ingram, P (2001).

An Overview of Diversity Awareness. Penn State University, PS: PSU Publications Distribution Center.

Diversity: Just What Is It Anyway? Dimensions in diversity, Vol. 3 (3). Southeast Community College.

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Champions of Diversity

The following quotes illustrate the passion and commitment needed from each of us to foster diversity awareness and understanding. Regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, economic status, or religious beliefs each of us has the ability to support diversity and benefit from a community that accepts and cares for all people.

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality."

Rev. Desmond Tutu

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Maya Angelou

"You must be the change you want to see in the world."

Mahatma Gandhi

"We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all different and yet the same."

Anne Frank

"The key to community is the acceptance, in act the celebration of our individual and cultural differences. It is also the key to world peace."

M. Scott Peck

"An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."

Many Cultures, One Home