



Taking Note: Can We Talk About This?

Part of assessing your program's efforts on equity and diversity is looking at how the adults involved talk and relate to each other around these issues. This tool will help you get a quick feel for how the adults in your organization discuss (or avoid discussing) various dimensions of equity and diversity. It will also provide some suggestions for enhancing the staff's capacity to engage topics which may be unfamiliar or otherwise challenging.

While it is not always easy to discuss such topics, open dialogue is necessary for creating a shared understanding of your program's values and goals, and for developing meaningful and concrete ways to hold everyone accountable for effectively serving participants and families of all backgrounds and experiences. In addition, until we as adults can talk across differences about matters like power and privilege, stereotypes and disparities, young people will not have the role models they need to fully develop their own skills for understanding, respecting, and learning from others.

This tool is designed to complement the Program Assessment for Equity and Diversity process. Individuals should complete the checklists first and then share answers with the entire staff.

The checklists in Parts A and B below will help you gauge what is – and what isn't happening in staff and organizational dialogue around issues related to equity and diversity. They are centered on two basic questions:

- Do particular issues get raised for discussion among adults in the program?
- If so, what happens when they get raised? Are they acknowledged? Discussed? Ignored? Incorporated into your program's goals?

For each set of issues in the left column, ask yourself first: Do these issues get raised? California Tomorrow's experience suggests that in some programs, issues like race and racism, sexual orientation, bias, inclusion and exclusion, and so on don't get talked about at all. In other cases, the issues may get raised, but only by one or a few people for whom they are a concern, while others stay out of the conversation. Finally, in some programs, issues are brought up by many different people, and generate substantial interest and attention within the program. Check the applicable box or boxes under the "do the issues get raised" heading to indicate where your program falls. You will notice there is also a space to add relevant additional issues from both your work and the larger community that may or may not be discussed in your program.

For issues which do get raised in your program, after completing the first set of responses, check the appropriate box or boxes under the "if they do get raised" heading to indicate what happens when the issues get brought up.

Answering these questions will give you a sense of where the strengths and comfort of your staff lie in discussing various dimensions of equity and diversity. These strengths can provide a basis for further dialogue or implementation of new goals and strategies. Answering the questions may also alert you to issues that people may be less aware of or that they are reluctant to discuss.

Part C offers ways to enhance your organization's ability to address the topics that are less visible or more challenging.

Part A: Talking About Diversity

ISSUES	DO THE ISSUES GET RAISED AMONG ADULTS IN YOUR PROGRAM?		IF THEY DO GET RAISED, WHAT HAPPENS?			
	not talked about in the program	raised by a few staff only not a concern for others	raised by multiple staff and spark significant interest	met with silence, disinterest, or resistance	good discussions but no action follows	good discussion and it leads to action
cultural experiences and differences						
race and racism						
class / economic diversity						
language diversity and bilingualism						
sexual orientation and family structure						
gender and gender stereotypes						
physical, mental, and learning disability						
other (specify)						

Part B: Talking About Equity

ISSUES	DO THE ISSUES GET RAISED AMONG ADULTS IN YOUR PROGRAM?			IF THEY DO GET RAISED, WHAT HAPPENS?		
	not talked about in the program	raised by a few staff only – not a concern for others	raised by multiple staff and spark significant interest	met with silence, disinterest, or resistance	good discussions but no action follows	good discussion and it leads to action
community resources and needs						
community politics						
barriers to access and participation (within program and/or in society)						
tensions between diverse groups						
disparities and gaps between diverse groups						
privilege and power						
stereotypes, bias, and discrimination						
youth empowerment						
social action and social justice						
other (specify)						

What You Can Do

California Tomorrow’s work starts from a few key premises: that issues of equity and diversity are important; that they can be safely and respectfully discussed among adults in your organization; that they can be effectively addressed in programs and organizations; and that after school and youth programs that address them can have a significant impact on youth and communities. That said, there is often groundwork that must be done to set the foundation for successful equity and diversity work at the program level. The following chart suggests some ways you can begin to overcome barriers to talking about challenging issues. You may wish to incorporate some of the more in-depth suggestions into your planning process using the Creating Your Action Plan Tool.

if the challenge is	it may help to
<p>People are afraid or remain silent about issues of diversity or equity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create safe spaces for conversation through group/team building (useful tools from this Tool Kit: Starting the Process: Pathways to Opening Dialogue; Who Are We in This Work?). • Have facilitated dialogues. • Begin conversations in smaller groups, and/or in “affinity groups” (groups in which individual members relate to each other through some common bond, e.g. gender, ethnicity, job duties, etc.). • Have leadership put issues on table.
<p>People don’t think there are challenges or problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information and research about the topic, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - expertise of knowledgeable staff members; - information gathered from youth and families in the program and community; - outside speakers/videos; and - articles and books. • Use tools from this Tool Kit, such as Listen to the Youth, or the Program Assessment Tool. • Seek out relevant professional trainings.
<p>There’s no shared sense of importance or urgency in addressing the issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information and research about the topic (as above). • Use tools from this Tool Kit, such as Listen to the Youth, the Program Assessment Tool, or the New Eyes on Your Program. • Participate collectively in relevant trainings and discuss material. • Provide space for those who do feel a sense of urgency to share their perspectives with the rest of staff. • Share personal reflections and experiences of what makes this important.

if the challenge is	it may help to
People don't agree on what to do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First come to agreement on values and general goals, as well as on the nature of the problems and challenges you seek to address – grounding all this in what you know about the young people in your program and what you want to do for them. • Research what works. • Assess current situation using tools from this tool kit or other tools of your choice. • Bring in outside facilitator to help brainstorm and choose strategies.
People don't think programs can make a difference.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look together at model programs, research on effective practices, etc.
People don't believe the program or organization will change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncover and address potential barriers to change (perhaps using the Organizational Culture section of the Program Assessment Tool). • Assess organizational leadership with an eye toward leading equity and diversity work; build capacity of leaders if necessary and/or open leadership on these issues to those with most significant expertise. • Develop and work toward a few achievable short-term goals to build momentum.