

**2015**

**GLOBAL OUTREACH  
in  
LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

**Bringing  
worlds  
together  
...one tip  
at a time.**



Office of Citizen Involvement  
MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

# Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b>	i
<b>Doing Outreach to Diverse Communities</b>	
• The Basics of Outreach	1
• Getting Started	2
• Build relationships	4
• Specific tools and strategies to ensure your outreach is effective	5
• Outreach with regard to specific activities and service delivery	6
• Miscellaneous outreach tips	7
<b>Chart for Creating an Outreach Plan</b>	8
<b>Tips for Establishing Successful Partnerships</b>	9
<b>Tips for Increasing Equity in Government Engagement Programs</b>	11
<b>Tips for Conducting Outreach to Asian-American Communities</b>	13
<b>Tips for Conducting Outreach to Elders</b>	15
<b>Tips for Conducting Outreach to Homeless Youth</b>	16
<b>Tips for Conducting Outreach to Transgender People</b>	19
<b>Presenters of Tips for Doing Outreach to Diverse Communities</b>	20
<b>Presenters of Tips for Establishing Successful Partnerships</b>	21

## PREFACE

The Multnomah County Citizen Involvement Committee (CIC) began the Diversity Outreach Workshops in 2008. The CIC’s mission is to increase engagement and input by the public into county policy decision-making. The workshops seek to improve the strategies and tools that county staff and volunteers use to conduct outreach to diverse communities by inviting those doing the work to share their best practices and lessons learned. This, in turn, enhances public engagement and input while broadening the community perspectives guiding policy decisions.

Over the years, the workshops have grown to include attendees from several government entities, non-profit organizations, and the public at large. During the workshops, as many as three organizations that have worked extensively with a variety of diverse communities present their “nuts and bolts” outreach tips and insights. They typically cover:

- How they evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the organization.
- How they discover and adopt new strategies for earning greater public trust.
- What has and hasn’t worked when conducting outreach.

Beginning in 2010, we began summarizing the tips offered by the presenters during the workshops and sending them to attendees. Since then, 23 government and non-profit organizations have presented. In an effort to make the tips even more accessible, we have assembled this compilation guide.

**Please note:** this guide is not meant to be an exhaustive list of everything that can be done to improve outreach to diverse communities. Rather, it is an anthology of the key tips that presenters chose to emphasize. Most presenters (*see pages 20-21*) focused on tips that apply to conducting outreach across the board as well as building partnerships. Some presenters offered tips that apply to specific organizations or focus on specific populations. This is why they are listed separately beginning on page 11. Additionally, this is an evolving document that will be updated as future workshops take place. Please contact us if your organization is interested in presenting.

We are excited to provide you with this treasury of tips from our many outstanding presenters, and encourage you to go forth and utilize them to better involve diverse communities in your work!

You can learn more about our [programs and initiatives](#), including the Diversity Outreach Workshops, as well as the Office of Citizen Involvement, which supports our work. Additionally, you can find out about our events and activities by following us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

-Multnomah County Citizen Involvement Committee



## **The Basics Of Outreach**

**Cultural Competence** – *noun* - an often (and often over) used reference to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. According to Diversity Training University International, cultural competence comprises four components:

- a) Your awareness of your worldview and consciousness of how you react to different people;
- b) Your attitude based on your beliefs and values about cultural differences;
- c) Your knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews; and
- d) Your skills, including but not limited to, your ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.

**Tokenizing** – *verb* - doing outreach to diverse communities to demonstrate you have a diverse organization. Instead, consider how you can ensure there are specific roles for people to meaningfully contribute and provide input that will truly impact your organization. Try not to presume that the views or input of individuals represent the views or input of an entire diverse community. To help overcome this, seek to engage a cross-section of community members.

Throughout this document, you will consistently be made aware of how and why you should consider:

- Planning, partnering, and promoting your organization’s interactions with the general public as well as with specific communities.
- Taking the time to build the long-term relationships that are essential to building the trust and visibility necessary to effectively engage your audience(s).
- Putting the “out” in outreach through actual human contact.
- Seeking first to understand. This promotes connection, demonstrates commitment and increases your understanding of the communities to which you are conducting outreach before you start inviting participation. Additionally, this benefits you by generating interest and inviting participation.
- Keeping it real and local by ensuring that your goals, information, and talking points are relevant and appealing to the interests of the audience at hand, especially if you represent an organization that operates beyond the local area.
- Partnering with other organizations is vital to successful outreach since partners can leverage their client relationships to increase the likelihood your activities and services will succeed and be productive. Their clients already have established relationships and are more likely to trust the message if it comes through them. (*see page 9*)
- Creating a long-range outreach plan (e.g., five-year plan) with multi-faceted and coordinated strategies to increase the likelihood of success.
- And did we mention the importance of the “personal” touch?

## **Getting Started**

*“The secret of getting ahead is getting started.” -Mark Twain*

One of the overriding themes made by multiple workshop presenters is the need to fully understand what your organization seeks to gain from outreach before you get started. This helps you understand why you’re doing it in the first place and how you anticipate using it.

Overall, it has been suggested that when you are (re)creating your outreach plan, you start by answering the following questions *internally*\*:

- **What are your organization’s goals as well as the activities and services it provides?**

*Aligning your mission with your outreach might seem obvious and many times it is and sometimes it isn’t. For those times that it’s not, it’s essential that you avoid “mission creep” and ensure that there’s an actual need and a place for the outcomes you seek.*

- **What diverse communities are you seeking to reach? Within those communities, who’s your real audience (i.e, leaders, organizations, members of the public)?**

*It’s critical to assess who in the community you are trying to reach to best engage them and maximize the opportunity for your outreach efforts to succeed. The more you know about your audience, the better the outreach, so “go deep before you go wide”.*

- **Why do you want to reach these communities (e.g., demographic participation rates, service gaps, contract goals, organizational health, unique skill sets)? If you can, list some specific goals with timelines.**

*Here’s one place where “tokenizing” was used to describe programs that seem to be reaching out only to “check the boxes” and “fill the quotas” mandated or otherwise expected. Unless that’s your express purpose, take a hard look at “why” and your approaches for doing outreach.*

- **How would you like audience members to participate in order to achieve your goals?**

*Frequently, a disconnect exists between what your goals are in doing outreach and how the communities might best respond. By examining what we think will work or has worked, along with what we feel capable doing (and not), we can then start matching that to what communities want and expect.*

- **What are the best ways to make contact with audience members? When is the best time to engage them?**

*\*see a chart for laying out an outreach plan on page 8 (courtesy of the Office of Citizen Involvement and Community Energy Project)*

- **How are you prepared to create a safe and welcoming environment for them?**

*People need to feel welcome and safe. This mostly occurs in familiar environments where, for example, “there’s at least one other person who looks like them”. It’s important that you look at what you’re willing and able to do to accommodate these needs “before you reach out only to disappoint”.*

- **How will you measure your success (e.g., demographic participation rate changes, contract goals met, clients served quickly, survey results)?**

*Performance measures are tied to many important things, like funding and performance evaluations, that make measurable results critical. Yet most programs find it difficult if not impossible to evaluate many of the true outcomes of outreach to diverse communities. Consider employing as many measures as possible, including both qualitative and quantitative to demonstrate the impacts of your outreach and whether you’re achieving your goals. Additionally, consistently measure your performance so that you make “necessary course corrections before you go too far off track”.*

- **How will you incorporate their participation and input into your activities and services? Additionally, how will you communicate any resulting changes?**

*One of the most common issues facing outreach efforts is lack of follow up from past attempts. Owning that and preparing next steps proves invaluable to successful outreach. “Unrealistic and unfulfilled expectations are toxic and can be avoided with proper planning and good communication.” Closing the loop and making sure that everyone knows what happened is one sure way to ensure continued participation.*

Answering these questions will help you establish why and how you are doing outreach as you move forward. Based on your answers, the options may range from few to boundless. Now that you have your outreach plan it’s time to:

## **Build relationships**

*“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” -Stephen Covey*

Relationships make the biggest difference in determining the effectiveness of your outreach. It's also ranked as the most difficult element to achieve, given a variety of obstacles, with time, language, and cultural differences being the most common. Trust is key to overcoming obstacles and it doesn't get built with a few cursory visits. The required investment of time, planning, and resources is challenging and yet may make the difference regarding whether your relationships and ultimately your outreach efforts are successful.

The best advice on how to build relationships includes:

- Nurture relationships to increase inroads into communities and with potential partners. Be seen, be consistent, be open, and deliver on your promises however trivial they may seem.
- Approach community members with the attitude that they are the experts of their own situations. This is both respectful, effective, and is the truth. Outreach works best when guided, if not directed, by the community.
- Interact with diverse community members in a sensitive, dignified, and ultimately sustainable manner. Being genuine and sincere overcomes many of the perceived barriers.
- Communicating clearly to community members about what you do and why you are engaging them will typically open the right doors at the right times. Having clear expectations up front helps let them know what you're doing and avoid misunderstandings later.
- Listen with an open mind to the people you are engaging, including their personal stories, to learn what they need and demonstrate you care. This may include interviewing them. These approaches increase the likelihood you'll understand their needs in relation to your organization's goals, activities and services.
- Similarly, consult your clients directly when planning and setting up your programs to ensure your assumptions are correct. One example comes from the local non-profit organization Sisters Of The Road. They realized their meal program wouldn't be accessible to everyone unless they accepted food stamps and permitted bartering.
- Include as many people and organizations as possible within the communities to which you are conducting outreach.
- Identify and attend meetings, events and activities that are being held by community organizations (first ensure they are open to attend). Do this prior to seeking their participation in order to educate, build connections, demonstrate commitment, and show why engagement is in their interest.
- Be consistent and responsive to people and organizations within diverse communities when building relationships and conducting activities and services.

- Tailor your interactions by determining what will increase community members' interest and ability to hear you. This could include:
  - clearing the air concerning issues to which your organization is connected in order to reduce negative feelings and viewpoints;
  - actively listening to community members. This should include asking them questions, even about things off-topic that are important to them.
- Exercise patience with community members given they may have significant fear and distrust of institutional organizations (e.g., veterans with poor experiences at the Department of Veterans' Affairs). Be prepared to address their fears and distrust.
- Emphasize the importance of building relationships with community members to your organization's staff and stakeholders in order to overcome internal stereotypes and encourage their support.
- Use the expertise and relationships staff and existing participants already have as a referral resource for your organization and its activities and services.

### **Specific tools and strategies to ensure your outreach is effective**

- Collect accurate data about diverse communities to maximize your understanding of their needs, plan strategies, and evaluate outcomes. This includes connecting analysis of data with stories, case studies, and other indicators of what's happening on the ground.
- Identify important issues and attributes unique to specific communities when engaging them and delivering services (e.g., focusing on the larger family is important in the Latino community).
- Ensure your communication and services are as culturally and language-specific as possible.
- Hire staff from the communities you are trying to engage (e.g., veterans, bilingual speakers) and involve them during interactions as much as possible.
- Keep geography in mind. Locate and deliver your activities and services proximate to the communities you are trying to reach. Engage them at events and institutions where they congregate (e.g., schools, community centers).
- Use media appropriate to specific communities when delivering information (e.g., Rose City Resource Guide or the Street Roots Directory for homeless people).
- Ensure staff members who interact with diverse communities know and accurately convey information. This means training staff thoroughly, as well as any partners that provide information on your organization's behalf. Similarly, have partner organizations train your staff on information you're distributing on their behalf.
- Provide contact information when asked and on your materials for the specific individual(s) in your organization who can assist people with relevant issues. It's



particularly important to have staff that understand and can assist with issues related to specific communities like veterans, minorities and women.

- Cut through government speak. Summarize key points in normal language, and focus on what clients “need to know” and how it relates to them. One way to do this is to summarize the points you want to convey into questions. Then provide only the information that’s needed to answer them.
- If possible, give community members at least two or three choices with regard to engagement opportunities or service delivery. This approach offers dignity and invites ownership, as well as helps tailor activities and services to best meet their needs.
- Minimize assessment and intake procedures to lessen the burdens community members have in order to participate. Also, explain why you need to ask personal questions and what’s done with the information.
- Be prepared to make referrals and then follow-up to make sure community members ultimately received the information and services they wanted.
- Utilize success stories to reach specific audiences, create media coverage, and localize national information. Although you should consistently draw attention to stories, they can be particularly compelling during calendar milestones like Hispanic Heritage or African-American Month. Potential success stories may be generated by presenting awards and/or producing videos. Have the subjects tell their own stories as this is likely to increase interest and connection with the communities you are seeking to reach.
- Be prepared to handle concerns raised from negative feedback by:
  - a) listening closely and assessing the concerns;
  - b) determining how you can address them;
  - c) addressing them as much as possible;
  - d) reconsidering whether the ways participation occurs is a good fit;
  - e) communicating outcomes to people who provided the feedback.

### **Outreach with regard to specific activities and service delivery**

- When planning activities and events consider:
  - a) what is your end goal or outcome, and what would you like to accomplish?
  - b) who is your audience and how can you best reach them?
  - c) when is the best time to reach your audience?
  - d) rather than planning a new activity or event, is it possible to achieve what you want by augmenting other ones?
- Invest resources and conduct outreach to ensure that the communities you’re trying to reach know about your activities and events far in advance.

- Once you've determined who your audience is, analyze what mediums are most effective for conveying information to them. For example, mail is critical for organizations like the Small Business Administration to reach women but it's not effective for Sisters Of The Road to reach people experiencing homelessness. Use analytics (e.g., email open rates, number of conversations during personal interactions) to determine the effectiveness of your outreach mediums, and adjust accordingly.
- Construct outreach materials from the perspective of how they affect community members to maximize their use and effectiveness, and expand access to your programs and services. This may include localizing and personalizing them as much as possible. For electronic media, personalize the templates and use hyperlinks. For handouts, consider using photos, diagrams, and other graphics that easily convey information and contain elements reflecting cultural attributes.
- Offer free items and services during activities to attract participants (e.g., Stand Down events for veterans). Also, provide services that allow community members to participate (e.g., lockers and pet care for people without shelter).

### **Miscellaneous outreach tips**

- When your outreach involves systemic change, consider pursuing independent grants to avoid politics that could compromise your mission.
- To retain existing volunteers:
  - a) assign clear duties and roles;
  - b) consistently ask for their input and leadership, and involve them in brainstorming sessions;
  - c) set clear performance measures to ensure your efforts are achieving their goals and to help volunteers understand the value of their participation;
  - d) create a culture of accountability for both you and them;
  - e) accommodate their needs and consistently show appreciation for their work.

**CHART FOR CREATING AN OUTREACH PLAN**

Organization goals/activities/services			
What communities are you trying to reach?	Community #1 _____	Community #2 _____	Community #3 _____
Who is your audience within the communities?	• • • •	• • • •	• • • •
What are your goals and timelines with regard to their engagement?	• • • •	• • • •	• • • •
How do you want audience members to participate in order to reach your goals?	• • • •	• • • •	• • • •
What are the best ways and times to engage them?	• • • •	• • • •	• • • •
How will you create safe and welcoming environments?	• • • •	• • • •	• • • •
Performance measures	• • • •	• • • •	• • • •
How will you incorporate their participation and input, and provide feedback?	• • • •	• • • •	• • • •

## **TIPS FOR ESTABLISHING SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Overriding premise of successful partnerships**

Invest in relationships with both existing and potential partners. Partnerships take time and serious commitment to build, but can pay significant dividends over time by leveraging limited resources, creating alliances, and being able to reach new communities and clients more easily.

### **Forming partnerships**

1. Conduct a needs analysis of your own organization to identify gaps (e.g., based on race, ethnicity, income) and desired qualities, and develop an outreach plan to connect with other organizations. When seeking to interact with multicultural populations, identify priority groups you want to reach using tools like data analysis and community surveys.
2. Research and reach out to: a) organizations with similar missions, purposes, values and/or client bases; b) organizations with different missions, purposes, values and/or client bases but may have a similar vision, rationale, and objectives to explore potential partnerships with you; and c) important community leaders and coalitions (e.g., Connecting Communities Coalition) that can act as liaisons and distribute information. If possible, reach out to potential partners using your existing connections and resources, such as current partners, allies, and volunteers. Also consider attending meetings of multicultural organizations and/or co-sponsoring diversity trainings and events when seeking to partner with them. This creates opportunities to bond and learn about one another. In general, think outside the box and be creative when identifying potential partners.
3. Have conversations with potential partners. Discuss:
  - a) what you each do and ideas for what you each need;
  - b) ways you can benefit one another;
  - c) the communities and client/customer both organizations reach;
  - d) the strengths you can each offer with regard to a potential partnership;
  - e) cultural competence and communication styles.
4. Create a statement clearly outlining the partnership's vision, rationale, and objectives. Also, explain why you are partnering. Be explicit about each partner's role and assign tasks and responsibilities based on strengths. Begin with smaller tasks and responsibilities, and then increase their size and complexity over time.
5. Use common language between your organizations to define key terms and create shared meanings.
6. Establish metrics to track desired activities, outputs, and outcomes (e.g., logic models or fidelity scales). Share relevant data as much as possible.

7. Develop and define the management model the partnership will use (cooperative, collaborative or integrated) and how decisions will be made (consensus, autonomous or vote). This includes creating procedures for clear decision-making, accountability, and input opportunities. Recognize that you may not always agree, but maintain a long-term outlook to preserve the partnership.

### **Managing partnerships**

8. Take advantage of your partner's expertise and relationships with their client groups by listening to their advice about being culturally specific and sensitive, and have them take the lead with interactions.
9. Hold regular meetings to assess your partnership's progress and performance, and make needed adjustments accordingly.
10. Cultivate trust by communicating openly and honestly. Be prepared to resolve differences when they arise.
11. Recognize when to compete and when to collaborate (prioritize client needs as much as possible).
12. Show gratitude to your partner for their contributions.
13. Consider ending your formal partnership when its purpose and objectives have been achieved. However, make every effort to continue maintaining your relationship with your partner over the long-term.

## **TIPS TO INCREASE EQUITY IN GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS**

- Assess your programs to identify how diverse communities are participating and engaging at levels comparable with the general public. Identify any barriers that may be throttling their ability to take part and engage. Brainstorm possible changes in policy and/or practice to overcome them. Prioritize them based on their importance and resources available, and implement accordingly.
- Since language is often one of the biggest barriers in communicating with many diverse communities, offer interpreters and important electronic and paper materials in other languages as much as possible.
- Evaluate materials in other languages or targeted for specific communities with their members to ensure the content is accurate, truly useful and culturally sensitive.
- Partner and collaborate with cultural organizations to learn from their wisdom, and to leverage the relationships and trust they already have within the communities they serve. To be most effective, this requires building relationships and trust over time. Begin by going out to meet with these organizations in person to:
  - a) demonstrate respect and your interest in genuinely engaging;
  - b) learn (e.g., their mission, people they serve, programs, goals, etc.);
  - c) learn how to best communicate and engage with the communities they serve;
  - d) identify key political, economic, and thought leaders;
  - e) educate (your programs and relevant engagement opportunities);
  - f) empower them to work with you over extended periods of time (e.g., assess your materials, follow you on social media and other communication mediums, serve as a liaison to communicate your information and pass questions and concerns to you, etc.);
  - g) offer your assistance, as genuine partnerships benefit each organization.
- Incorporate qualities or opportunities into your outreach and engagement programs that will specifically appeal to community members. For example, cultural exchanges create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding which is fertile ground for open and honest dialog.

- As an entire government organization, consider holding a series of introductory events and activities for key political, economic, and thought leaders from mainstream and diverse communities. The goal is to increase awareness of the existence and value of diverse community voices while introducing the government body to the community. Be sure to include immigrant and refugee communities.

**Presenter**

[Multnomah County Office of Citizen Involvement](#)

Robb Wolfson, Citizen Involvement Coordinator

## **TIPS FOR CONDUCTING OUTREACH TO ASIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITIES**

- Take into account Asian and Pacific Islanders are extremely diverse. Members come from nearly 50 countries and ethnic groups, each with distinct languages, cultures, traditions and histories. Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities speak over 100 languages and dialects. Each API community also has subpopulations that further limit their access and ability to participate. They include, but are not limited to people who are elderly, illiterate, have mental health/emotional issues, and parents with children under five years old. This means you must customize your outreach and engagement efforts as much as possible to be most effective.
- Recognize that a significant number of Asians are immigrants and refugees, and design your outreach, engagement, and long-term plans accordingly. Refugees in Multnomah County are primarily Asian. Further, 49% of refugees in Oregon hold a racial identity that is conventionally considered Asian. The increasing number of refugee and immigrant minorities in metro Portland is transforming community life, community associations, ethnic identities and political alliances. Refugees and immigrants have diverse needs, interests and customs as they develop new linguistic, cultural, political, economic, and social patterns.
- Support and work closely with community-based organizations and individuals who play key roles and serve as communication networks. They can be categorized as Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs), Community Religious Centers (CRCs), and Community Influentials. MAAs, CRCs, and Community Influentials are considered highly credible and trusted communication mediums. They translate messages from English accurately and confirm their trustworthiness and credibility to community members. They can also be a critical resource for overcoming cultural and religious differences that present communication barriers. As a result, they can be a critical resource for mainstream agencies, institutions, other organizations, and the media.
- When working with MAAs, CRCs and Community Influentials, be aware that the messages will vary depending on their source and intent. It is important for public employees to understand how their desired message will be presented ahead of time. By tailoring messages culturally, public employees can provide the most relevant information.
- Explore using communications mediums such as newspaper, radio, television and internet news sources.



- Language is still the primary barrier to effective communication. Some API members are illiterate in any language and unable to access text-based information. Language also embodies different cultural communication modes. Consequently, messages should be presented by combining textual, visual, and oral elements as much as possible. Carefully plan and prepare effective messages that use the written and spoken languages most suitable to targeted groups. Additionally, word-of-mouth is a very effective tool.
- Be cognizant that lack of time is the barrier most cited to participating civically in mainstream society as well as in API communities. People frequently don't have time due to other life obligations (e.g., churches, family, work, school). Other barriers include lack of English proficiency, financial constraints, and lack of knowledge about how to participate. Strategies that seek to overcome these obligations can determine success.
- Create opportunities for community members to engage and interact with public agencies as much as possible to increase access to services, as well as reduce communication and service gaps.
- Participate in social activities held by different communities, such as New Year celebrations. In addition to building trust and relationships within the communities, it increases your understanding of their diversity and complexity.
- Focus on developing the leadership and organizational capacity of skilled community members who want opportunities to train and work with public agencies. This includes recruiting refugees and immigrants to work as planners, administrators, and policymakers. In addition to creating messengers and providing accurate information for agencies, it increases community trust and the likelihood of success.

**Presenter**

[Asian Family Center](#)

Lee Po Cha, Director

## **TIPS FOR CONDUCTING OUTREACH TO ELDERS**

### **Significant factors to be aware of concerning elders**

- According to the 2010 U.S. census, 11,000 people a day are turning 60. By 2030, the 65+ population will more than double and comprise nearly 20% of the national population. The fastest growing elder demographic group is 85+. This group is likely to be more frail and isolated than other groups. In 2010 there were 53,364 centenarians, a 65.8% increase since 1980.
- Age segregation is a major problem that has severe negative consequences.
- Many children aren't close to their grandparents or have a significant elder in their immediate circle.

### **Successful Outreach Tools and Best Practices**

- Employ multiple tools to reach elders since they are made up of diverse population groups commensurate with the rest of our community.
- Implement an “elder friendly lens” when creating materials and communicating. This includes:
  - a) using 14 pt fonts with written materials;
  - b) keeping written materials simple without a lot of busy fonts and colors;
  - c) having a real person answer the phone;
  - d) speaking clearly on the phone and in person;
  - e) providing adequate seating;
  - f) having large signage to direct people to events and services.
- Participate in peer-to-peer speaking engagements and tabling events with partner agencies in the Aging Service Network (e.g., IRCO, Loaves and Fishes, NAYA, Urban League, Impact NW, Hollywood Senior Center, Friendly House, Neighborhood House, YWCA, Store to Door, Ride Connection, neighborhood associations). In 2010, Elders in Action participated in 101 community and media events reaching 59,720 people.
- Publicize programs and services through the Metro East Community Hotline, as well as Boom News and other papers.
- Despite the technological divide, maintain constant contact with the elder community using Twitter and Facebook (in 2011 35% of Elders in Action's 728 fans were over 55).
- Use interns and students from Portland Community College, Portland State University, and University of Portland to support your outreach efforts.

### **Presenter**

#### **[Elders in Action](#)**

Vickie Hersen, Executive Director

## **TIPS FOR ENGAGING WITH HOMELESS YOUTH**

Homelessness among youth is not a simple housing issue. Being "on the streets" refers to a complex psychological state or worldview connected to a perceived lack of options that's intrinsically linked to a youth's identity and sense of self-worth.

### **Be competent about the culture of homeless youth**

- Effective work is cross-cultural. Youth on the streets have adapted to a sub-culture of survival with very different expectations, values, identities, hierarchies and language, and it will take time for them to adjust to change.
- The "street subculture" meets critical emotional needs for youth that haven't been adequately met elsewhere. It is unfair and unrealistic to expect them to immediately drop the values that have helped them survive outdoors.
- Homeless youth are frequently distrustful of adults due to dysfunctional homes, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, abandonment and commercial sexual exploitation. This distrust extends to "adult" institutions, such as schools, hospitals, social services, law enforcement and workplaces. Even helpers are viewed as potential exploiters and predators until proven otherwise. Homeless youth quickly profile adults as users, authoritarians, or rescuers.
- Strive to engage homeless youth as worthy ambassadors of the adult world from which they have been marginalized (or worse). This means displaying the same gestures of courtesy and respect you would model as a stranger in a foreign country.

### **Effective Practices**

- Communicate verbally and through body language in a respectful and accommodating manner. When possible, make eye-level eye contact with the person you are addressing. If they are sitting, crouch to their eye-level when speaking to minimize the power differential. Say "please" and "thank you" to create rapport and cooperation.
- Get consent. Always try to ask for permission before interacting with youth. They often have very sensible reasons for distrusting adults based on very real experiences of neglect, abuse and exploitation.
- Be consistent in your own and your organization's behavior and message. You and your staff should try to convey the same message in the same manner each and every time.
- Introduce yourself politely to youth experiencing homelessness and/or possible mental health issues so they know exactly who is communicating to them and why.
- Be calm, flexible, and make your expectations clear. This includes being transparent and articulate about expectations and eligibility criteria, as well as offering options and choices as much as possible.

- Ask open-ended questions (e.g., how's it going tonight?) before attempting any further dialogue to engage and quickly assess a young person's mood, language skills and approachability.
- Speak literally and avoid making promises.
- Be cognizant of the power imbalance that exists when you interact with homeless youth, which means you have and/or will be perceived as having control during interactions.
- Many homeless youth belong to street families that act as survival support networks. Youth are often unwilling to separate from their street family to the extent they refuse services like shelters.
- Ask homeless youth what they would like to be called as they frequently have street names. A street name is crucial to a youth for the purpose of maintaining a survival identity and shedding a victim identity.
- Understand the importance of pets to homeless youth and try to accommodate them as much as possible during interactions and when providing services.
- Design your programs to meet real, participant-identified needs.
- Offer a variety of opportunities to engage, encourage participation, and build trust. These can include: participant involvement in program design, forum development, and staff hiring; participant agreements and informed consent; engaging, skill-based activities and support groups; peer mentors; satisfaction surveys; and a grievance process.
- Provide client services that address the consequences of trauma. One example is the specialty program Dialectical Behavior Therapy. It incorporates trauma-specific interventions that respond to: the need for respect, information, connection, and hope for the future; the adaptive function of symptoms; and the need to work collaboratively in a person-directed and empowering way. Interventions might include teaching coping skills, like emotional modulation and self-soothing, to manage trauma responses/symptoms.
- Employ practices that ensure physical and emotional safety for clients and staff, as well as the ability to respond to crises. These include adoption of health and safety policies and procedures, de-escalation training, critical incident policies and procedures, team response and debriefing, individual crisis plans, centralized tracking of incident reports and exclusions, and client re-entry meetings and behavioral agreements.
- Prevent and respond to staff trauma. It's critical to ensure supervisors have an open-door policy, adequate team support exists, and staff has opportunities to do self-care.

### **Resources to explore**

- <http://yellowbrickroadoutreach.blogspot.com>
- Brain Rules by John Medina
- The Developing Mind by Daniel Siegel
- Streetworks: Best Practices and Standards in Outreach Methodology to Homeless Youth by [Trudee Able-Peterson](#) and [Richard Hooks Wayman](#)
- The Freedom Manual: A Project of Roaddawgz by Nell Bernstein
- Street Culture by JT Fest
- Street Wise: 80's documentary about Seattle-area street youth that conveys valuable messages. Available in segments on YouTube.
- Children Underground: Documentary about street youth in Bucharest. This is very applicable to outreach work done in Portland. It's upsetting, so view it with caution.

### **Presenters**

#### [Janus Youth Programs](#)

Dennis Lundberg, Associate Director

#### [Outside In](#)

Heather Brown, Youth Development Director

## **TIPS FOR CONDUCTING OUTREACH TO TRANSGENDER PEOPLE**

- Differentiate understanding of diverse sexual orientation from diverse gender identity. They are not the same thing.
- Evaluate your forms to insure they ask inclusive questions.
  - a) Are they asking only for ‘legal name’, or is there also an option for ‘preferred name’?
  - b) If they ask for ‘sex’, is there an option for “intersex” or “other” as well as M/F?
  - c) Is there an option for “preferred pronoun”? Do not assume male/female only pronouns are used.
  - d) If they ask for ‘gender’, is there an option for something other than M/F such as “transgender”, “genderqueer” or “other”?
- When working with children and youth, affirm the child’s gender expression if it is non-stereotypical/nonconforming. This may include telling a male child that something they are wearing is “pretty” or a female-identified child that they look “sharp” or “handsome”.
- Be observant of parent/caregiver attitudes regarding a gender nonconforming child. Follow their lead if they are supportive or affirming of the child/youth. If they are not, do your best to affirm the child’s/youth’s self-expression and consider the possibility that the family may benefit from some guidance on establishing healthy environments for gender diverse children and youth.
- Be conscious of the need transgender adolescents and teens may have for medical consultation and intervention. This may include evaluations for pubertal suppression and/or gender affirming hormone therapy. The Oregon Health Plan began covering the treatments in January 2015.
- Recognize that sexual exploitation, drop-out rates and drug abuse are highest among transgender and genderqueer youth who are homeless. It is imperative to give them access to transgender-specific mental health and medical care in addition to food and shelter.
- Encourage agencies/staff to expand their understanding of gender diversity through engagement with organizations such as TransActive Gender Center.

### **Presenter**

[TransActive Gender Center](#)

Jenn Burleton, Executive Director

**PRESENTERS OF GENERAL TIPS FOR CONDUCTING OUTREACH  
TO DIVERSE COMMUNITIES**

- [Basic Rights Oregon](#)  
Peter Dakota-Molof, Trans Justice Organizer  
Khalil Edwards, Racial Justice and Alliance Building Organizer
- [Central City Concern](#)  
Daniel Garcia, Program Manager  
Kathy Pape, Communications Manager  
Jennifer Wilcox, Program Wilcox
- [Community Energy Project](#)  
Sherrie Smith, Outreach and Marketing Supervisor
- [Sisters of the Road](#)  
Monica Beemer, Executive Director
- [United States Small Business Administration](#)  
Kellie Randall, Public Affairs Specialist
- [Urban League of Portland](#)  
Midge Purcell, Organization & Public Affairs Coordinator

*Disclaimer: Presenters may no longer be with the organization or have a different job position.*

## **PRESENTERS OF TIPS FOR ESTABLISHING SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS**

- [Central City Concern](#)  
Sonja Ervin, Director of Cultural Development
- [Coalition for Communities of Color](#)  
Serena Stoudamire Wesley
- [Elders in Action](#)  
Vickie Hersen, Executive Director
- [New Avenues for Youth](#)  
Sean Suib, Associate Executive Director
- [Oregon Food Bank](#)  
Shawn DeCarlo, Metro Services Manager
- [Oregon Health & Sciences University](#)  
Ebony Lawrence, Outreach and Recruitment Coordinator
- [Oregon Outreach, Inc.](#)  
Rebecca Black, Founder and Executive Director
- [Outside In](#)  
John Duke, Clinic and Health Services Director
- [Portland Community Gardens Program](#)  
Laura Niemi, Program Coordinator
- [Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives, Inc.](#)  
Shalonda Menefee, Homeownership Retention Outreach Coordinator  
Deborah Turner, Deputy Director
- [Portland Office of Human Relations](#)  
Polo Catalani, Immigrant & Refugee Coordinator
- [Regional Arts & Culture Council](#)  
Tonisha Toler, Outreach Specialist
- [SE Works](#)  
Holly Whittleston, Executive Director

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