

What is *Knowing Who You Are*?



Knowing Who You Are (KWYA) is a research-based training curriculum designed to raise awareness about the importance of developing a healthy sense of racial and ethnic identity (REI). Development of a healthy REI can help youth establish consistency in their life with regard to how they view themselves and can be an important anchor from which positive outcomes are possible. However, all too often, children and youth in care are separated from their families and communities, both of which are primary sources of experience and understanding about one's REI. KWYA allows CASA/GAL staff and volunteers to explore their own ethnic identity and awareness of prejudices so they can create a supportive environment for children and youth to engage in similar exploration. The KWYA training curriculum encourages participants to explore how creating a supportive environment for REI development can be integrated into day-to-day practice, and thereby make for more effective advocacy.

WHAT IT DOES AND DOES NOT DO?

Knowing Who You Are (KWYA) allows individuals the opportunity to develop personal awareness of their own Racial and Ethnic Identity (REI). It also teaches about the importance of this knowledge, even to the youngest child. KWYA workshops serve as a great catalyst in developing consciousness to issues involving the children and families that CASA/GAL advocates work with, while introducing participants to the systemic impact of racism on various factions in society. While KWYA introduces the idea of institutional racism and allows for discussion on both personal and professional levels, it does not provide detailed explanations regarding the inner-workings of the systems which, either intentionally or unintentionally, perpetuate racism.

IS THIS THE 'RIGHT' DIVERSITY/CULTURALLY TRAINING FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Every diversity/cultural competency training should be purposefully planned taking into consideration:

- Where the organization is on its journey to be more culturally competent
- The past experiences and reactions of staff and volunteers to previous culture competency trainings
- The needs of your intended audience
 - If there is push back among the intended audience then perhaps more focus should be on developing awareness, and even then, this should be accomplished incrementally.

A description of various types of diversity training and their purpose can be found [here](#).

In addition to *Knowing who You Are*, please keep in mind that there may be other cultural competency and diversity trainings available in your state that could present state-specific as well as general information. When determining if KWYA is the right curriculum for your organization at this time, it will be helpful to understand the curriculum's components.

KWYA COMPONENTS

VIDEO

The objectives of the video are to:

- Provide a common framework for learning about racial and ethnic identity formation and its impact on youth in out-of-home care.
- Open a healthy dialogue about racial and ethnic identity formation and the many related topics that previously may have been ignored or considered uncomfortable.
- Illustrate overt and subtle ways that prejudice and racism undermine an individual's sense of self along with the particular challenges faced by youth in care.
- Initiate discussion about the role that individuals and organizations, particularly social workers and others in the child welfare system, can play in supporting the development of a healthy racial and ethnic identity formation for youth in care.

E-LEARNING

Participants in the e-learning will be given the opportunity to:

- Explore their own racial and ethnic identity and group membership.
- Recognize influences and impacts on racial and ethnic identity – both their own and others
- Increase awareness around stereotypes, prejudice and racism.
- Examine the realities of how race and ethnicity play out in our society, especially within large institutions such as the child welfare, health care, and education systems.
- Begin to develop skills for talking about race and ethnicity, addressing racism and discrimination, and integrating this new knowledge and skills into day-to-day practice.

CLASSROOM

By the end of the classroom training, participants will be able to:

- Identify personal and professional assumptions and biases that hinder respect for and value of racial and ethnic differences; begin to challenge and propose strategies for addressing stereotypes and prejudice.
- Understand how to support healthy racial and ethnic identity development.
- Engage in courageous conversations that demonstrate staying engaged, speaking our truth, experiencing discomfort and expecting/accepting non-closure.
- Apply practical opportunities and strategies for incorporating racial and ethnic identity development work into day-to-day practice with youth in care.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM KWYA TRAINING

- People who are working with youth, foster parents, and in the court system have reported that it is very important for providers and volunteers to be attending to the race and ethnicity of youth, but don't feel they have the resources to do so.
- It's important to have people from all parts of the system doing this work with youth, not just child welfare social workers.
- We must understand our own race and ethnicity in order to help support youth in developing a healthy identity.
- KWYA offers participant's concrete skills to help people who touch the lives of children have meaningful conversations about race and ethnicity.
- KWYA offers participants the opportunity to authentically explore issues related to race and ethnicity in an environment where *everyone* is learning from one another.
- Participants report the in-person training is the most important component of the project. It allows for time to talk about the information and issues that arise in the video and e-learning.