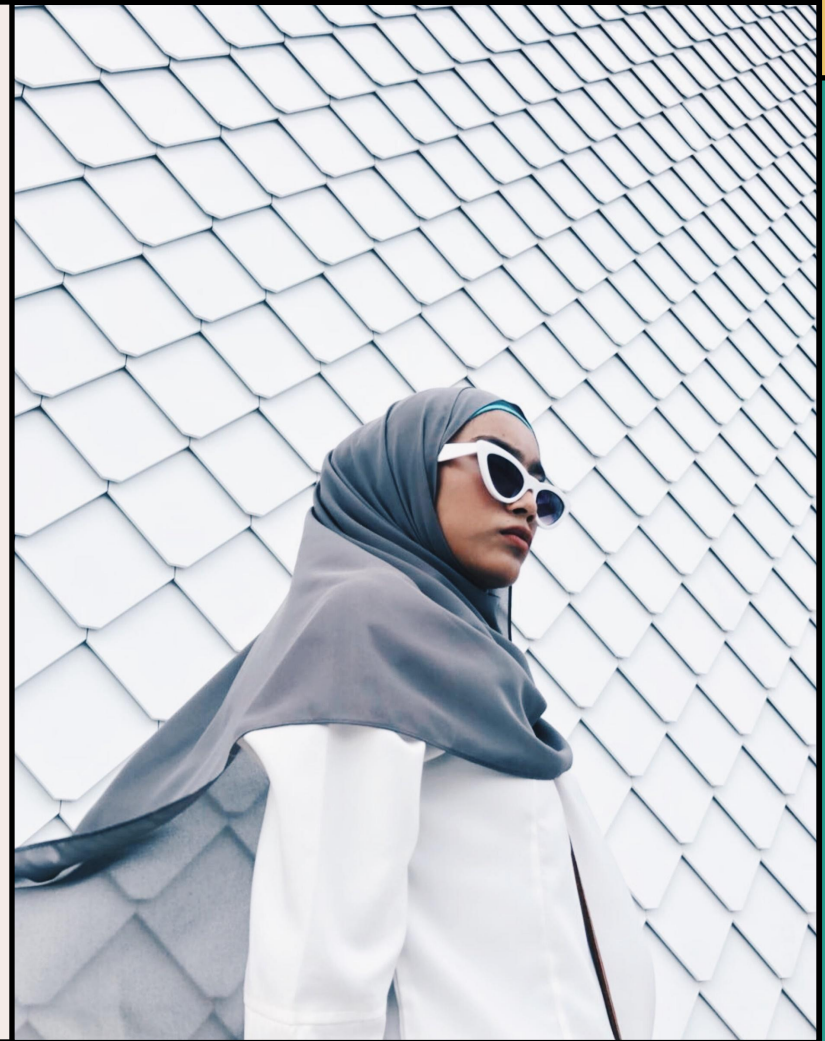


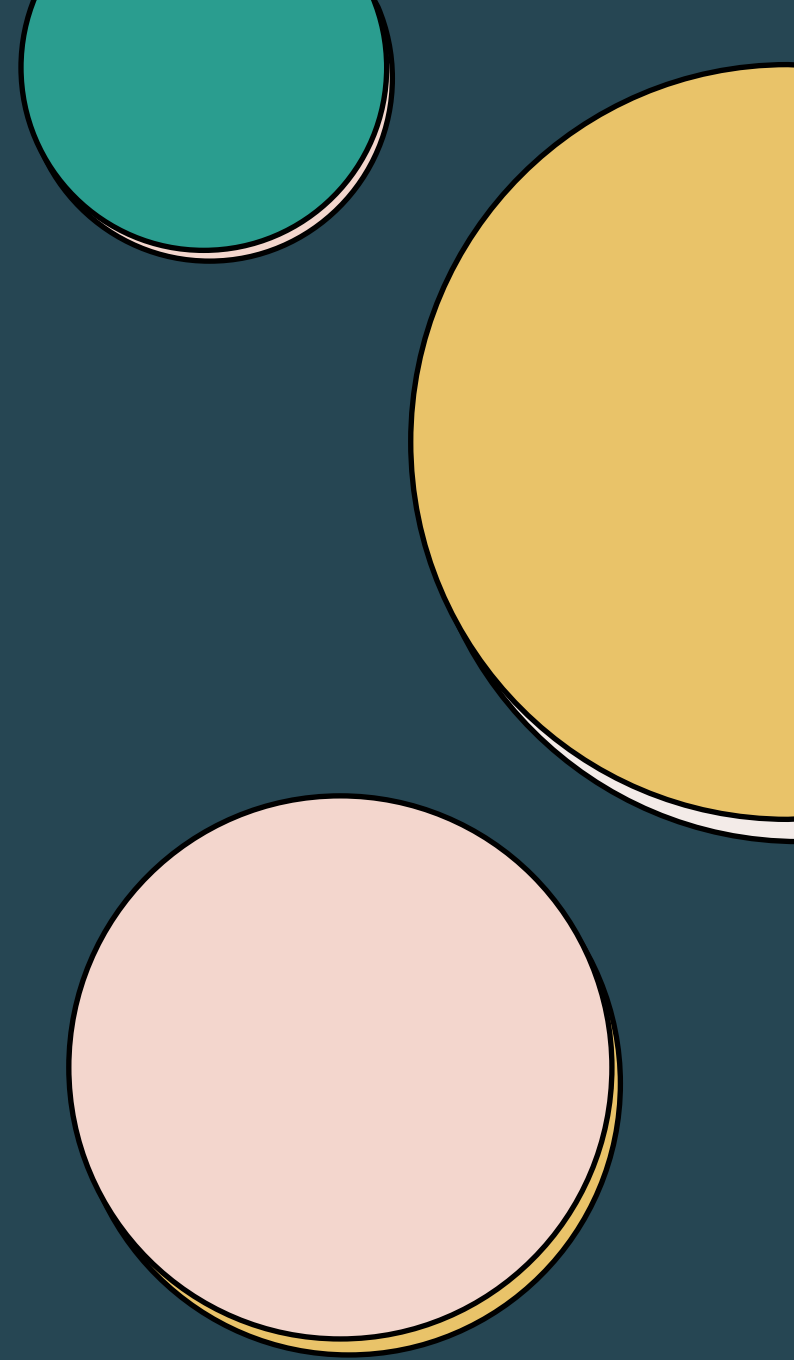
RJ Best Practices for Cultural Awareness

RYCNC Lunch & Learn Series 2025

www.rjnc.us



What Is Cultural Awareness?



Everything we think,
say and do is
processed through our
own cultural
backgrounds.

Because culture is
absorbed and passed
down from generation
to generation, rather
than explicitly taught,
we're seldom aware of
it.



Culture shapes not only our values and beliefs, but also our gender roles, family structures, languages, dress, food, etiquette, approaches to disabilities, child-rearing practices, and even our expectations for youth's behavior.



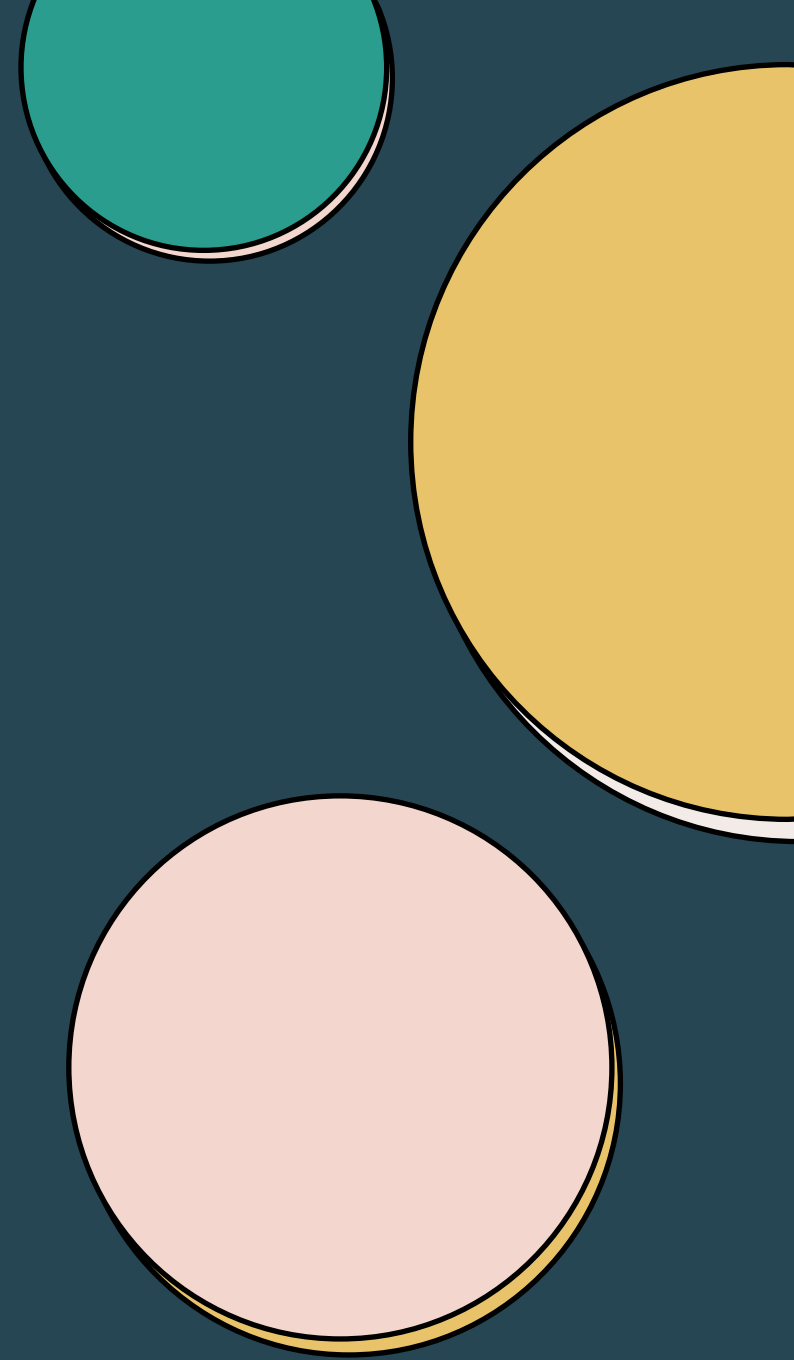
Many people have long believed it is better to act color-blind and/or culture-blind - that is to not acknowledge color or culture.

Research has shown that this artificial blindness keeps us from recognizing, acknowledging, and appreciating important differences.

Worse, it may lead to unintentional bias toward or disrespect for those who are different from us.



How cultural
awareness
shapes behavior





Our Culture In North America

The Cultures of most American programs and schools are based on White American values that:

- Teach youth to operate independently, stand out, talk about themselves, and view property as personal.

In contrast, many other cultures value:

- Interdependence, helping others and being helped, being modest, and sharing property in a more collective way vs. individualistic .



Our Culture In North America

Imagine a youth from a non-White American household coming into our RJ environment.

- They may feel unsafe, confused, isolated, alienated, conflicted, and less competent as a result of the biases that adults and other youth present
- They may not be practiced in the expectations present in traditional programs. In their home, the rules may be different. Some behaviors may be perceived as disrespectful
- It is important not to assume youth know our expectations. Always begin reviewing expectations together, learn what their needs are, as well as how you can support them



Many Different Cultures in USA

Imagine a youth from a non- American household, coming from a local middle school, into a high school 5x as large, with far more diversity.

- They may feel the need to be guarded due to a lack of trust.
- They may respond to the aggression of others with exaggerated protectiveness.
- They may feel the need to “prove themselves.”

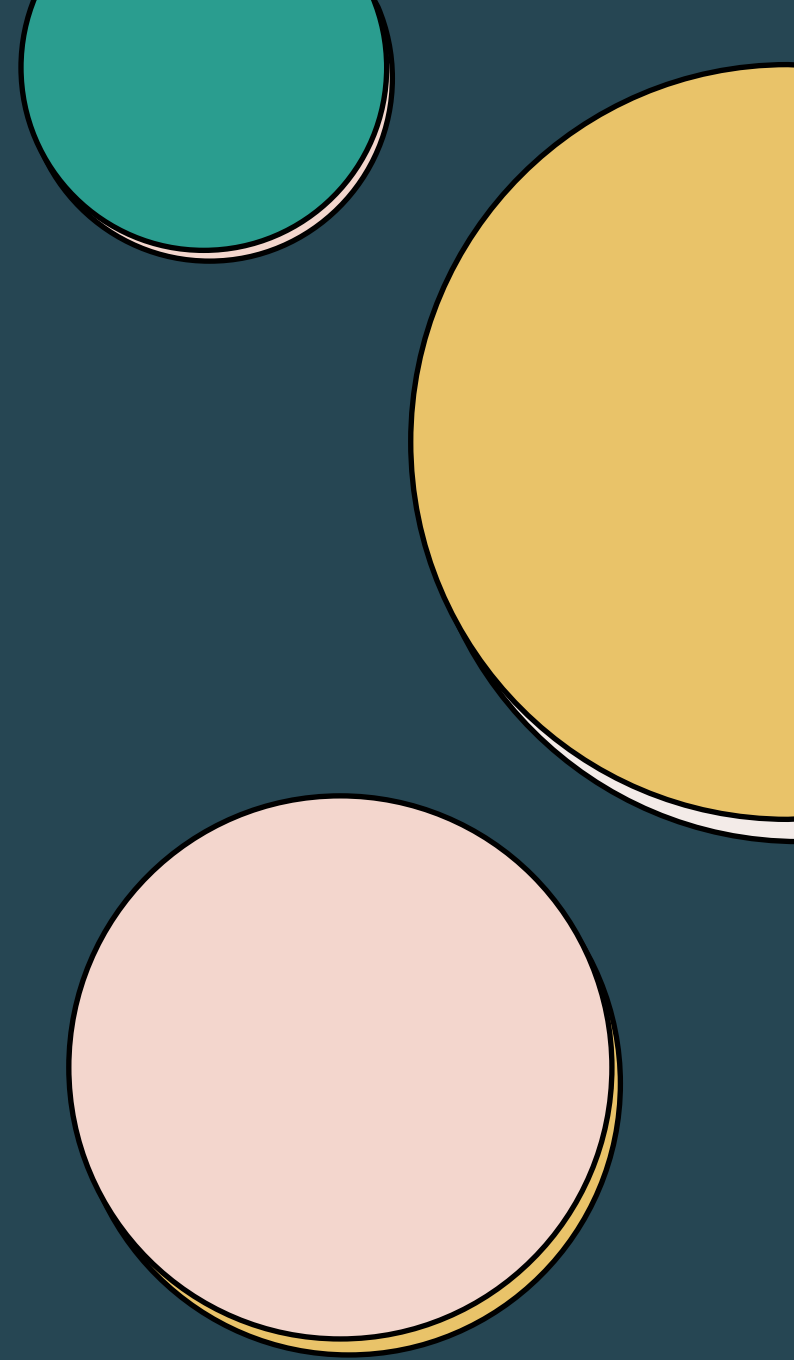


Many Different Cultures in USA

Imagine a youth from a family that lives in a very rural area, having to go into suburban or urban areas to do community service.

- They may be more reluctant to speak up or participate if they feel like a minority
- Will my home language be ridiculed?
- Are my clothes OK? Will I be bullied?

Rethinking Challenging Behavior



Because your responses to youth's conflicts and challenging behavior are culture bound, it is all too easy to misinterpret youth's words or actions.



Example:

White Americans expect youth to sit still and maintain eye contact to show that they're paying attention. In other cultures, youth might show interest by joining in, telling a story, or using trial and error. They are paying attention in a different way, which is equally valid and deserves to be honored. Children are not robots to be programmed.



Example:

Culture also defines personal space.

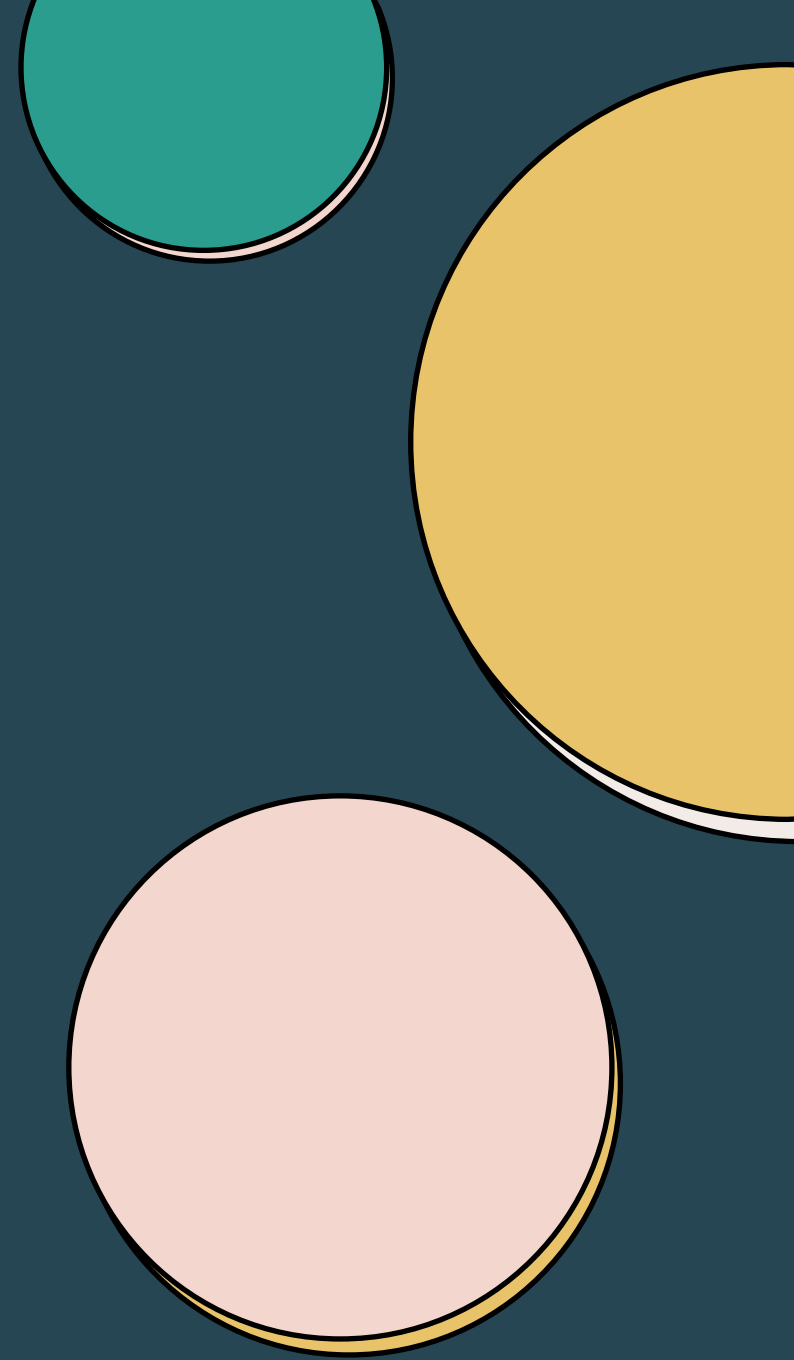
Some youth may feel uncomfortable being close to another, and back away or even push someone away.





How can we consider the needs and culture of youth who practice various religions to make programming and services more accessible?

How does
appropriate
cultural
awareness impact
our youth?





Respect

Learning how to talk about other cultures in a collaborative and mutually respectful way is essential for success in life.

This allows youth to better understand their own culture as well as the differences and nuances with their peers.

If they observe you being respectful of others' differences, they are empowered to do the same.



Empathy

Promoting awareness and creating a personal connection with diverse cultures can prevent youth from developing prejudices.

It helps them practice empathy with people different from themselves.



Cultural Sensitivity

By creating learning experiences that are more interactive and require collaboration, you can help ensure that every youth feels included, is given the space to learn in their own way, and is given a chance to succeed.



More Open-Minded

By exposing youth to a diverse range of opinions, thoughts, and cultural backgrounds, you foster their ability to be open to new experiences, ways of thinking, or ways of behaving that are different from their own.

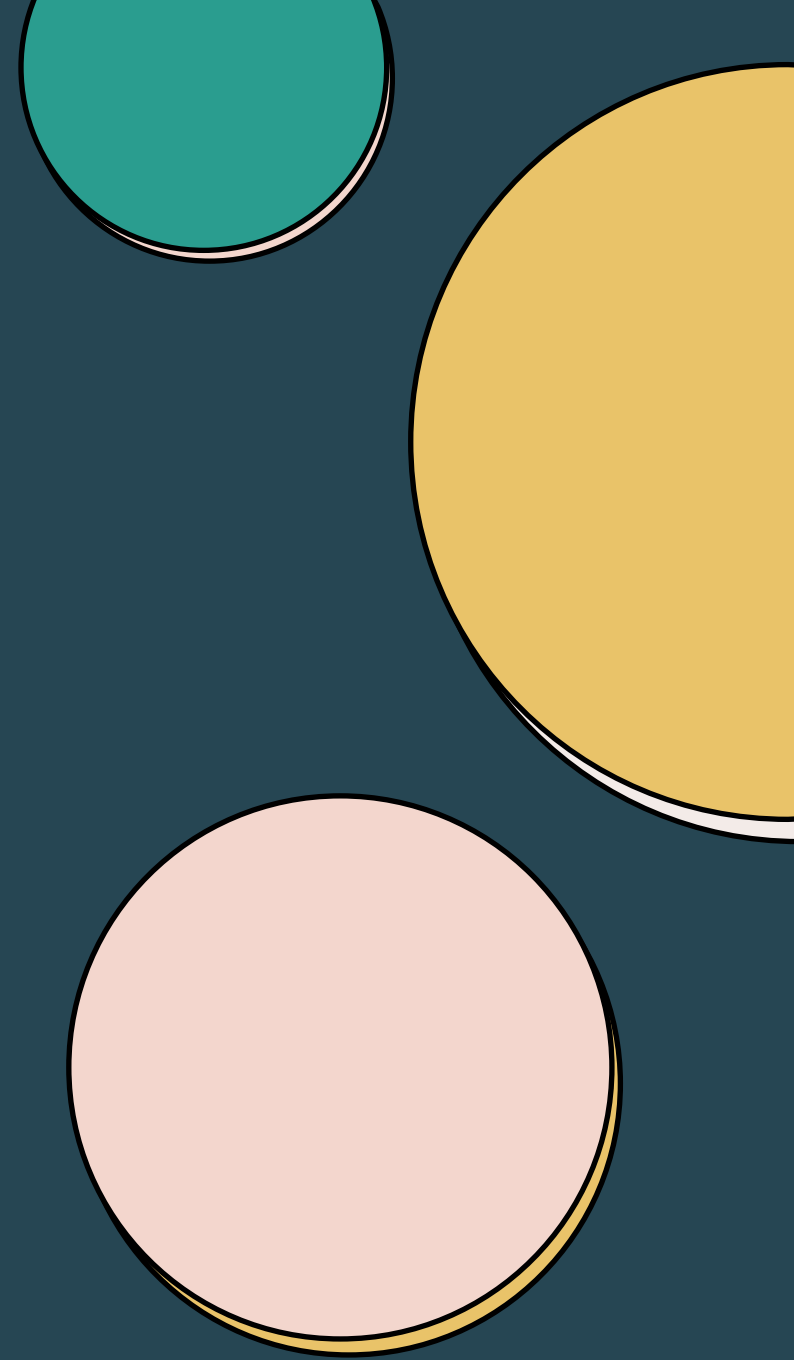


Feel More Socially Confident

Youth who learn about different cultures during their education feel more comfortable and safer with these differences.

This allows them to interact in a wider range of social groups and feel more confident in themselves as well as in their interactions with others.

What Can You
Personally Do?





Educate yourself. Take the time to learn about different cultures, their histories, values and traditions, as well as the impact of White dominant culture and colonialism.

Be open-minded. Approach cultural differences with an open mind. Avoid making assumptions or stereotypes about others. Try to make diverse social connections in your own life.

Communicate effectively. Be mindful of language barriers and non-verbal communication differences. Use clear language that respects their home culture. Be open and transparent.

Be patient and resilient. Building relationships takes time and effort.

Effective delivery techniques



Show respect. Learn what respect means to each youth and respect cultural norms and practices.

Seek feedback. Encourage open dialogue and feedback.

Promote inclusivity. Create an environment where everyone feels valued and respected. This is an act of social-justice!

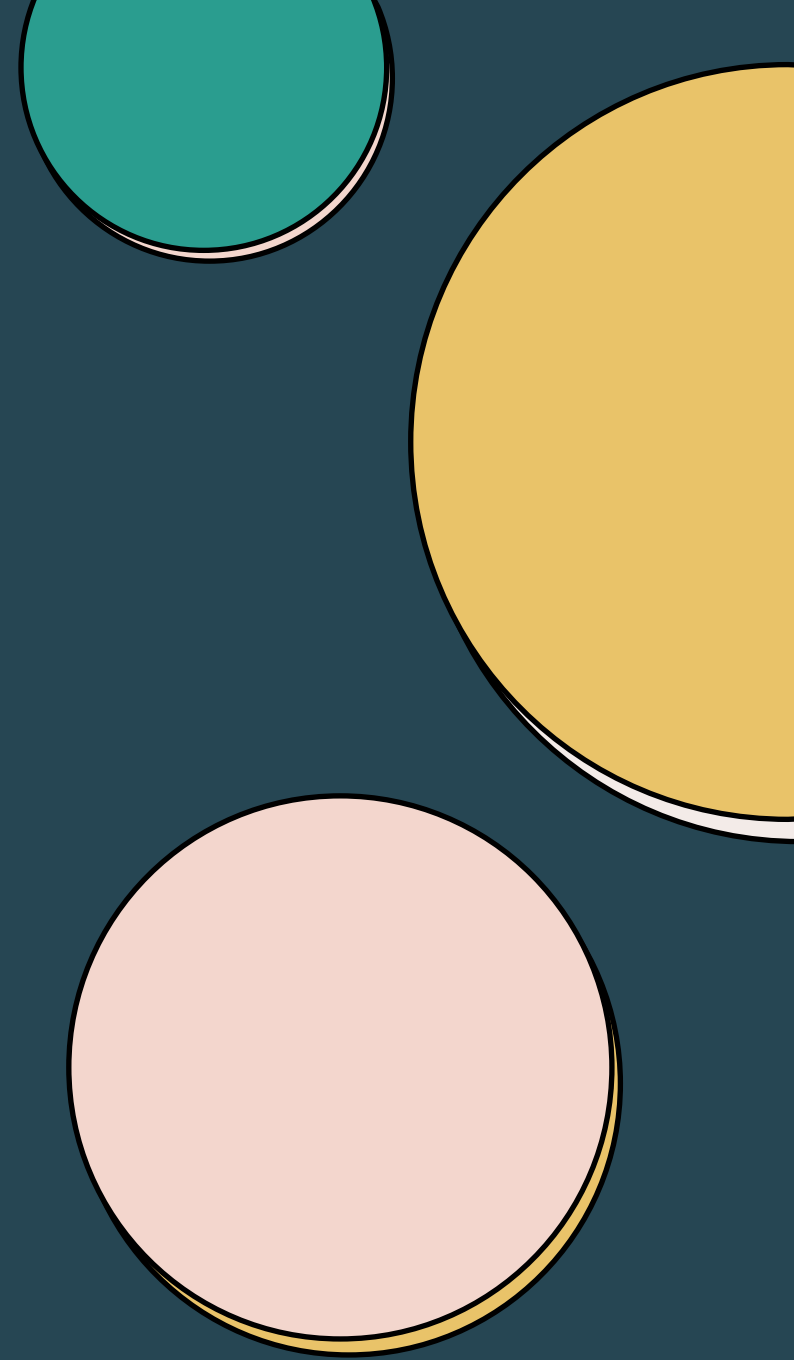
Be self-aware. Reflect on your own biases. Work on addressing and overcoming these biases.

Be adaptable. Be willing to adjust your behavior and practices to accommodate cultural differences.



How can we avoid judging parents who operate differently from dominant culture?

What Can Your
Organization
Do?



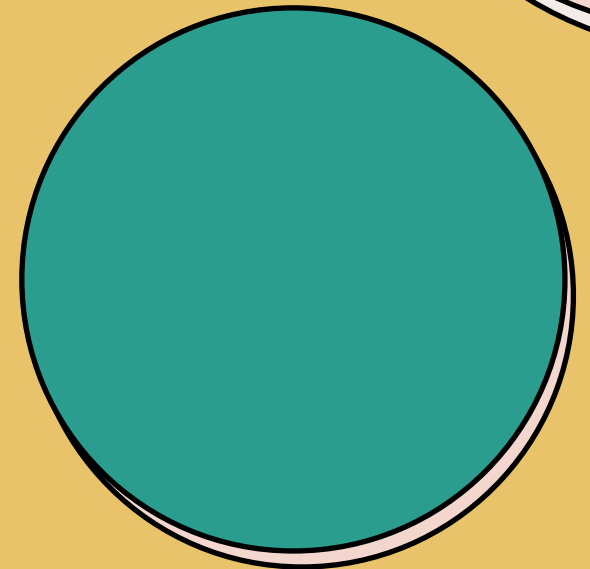
Create Safe Spaces – physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Seek diversity and representation in adults that serve youth of various backgrounds

Encourage Participation – voices and opinions should be heard and respected

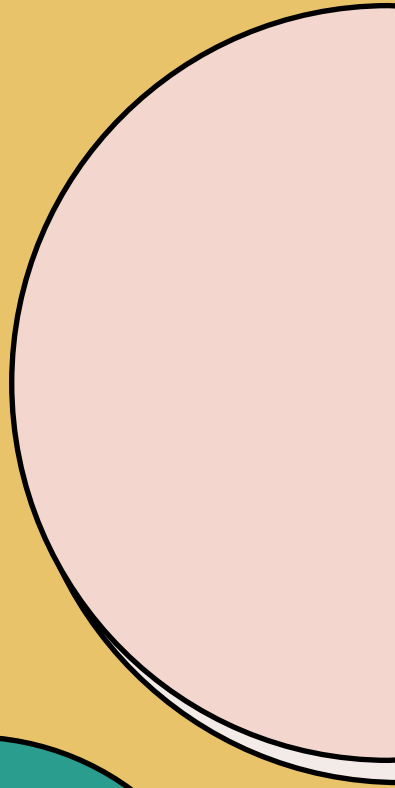
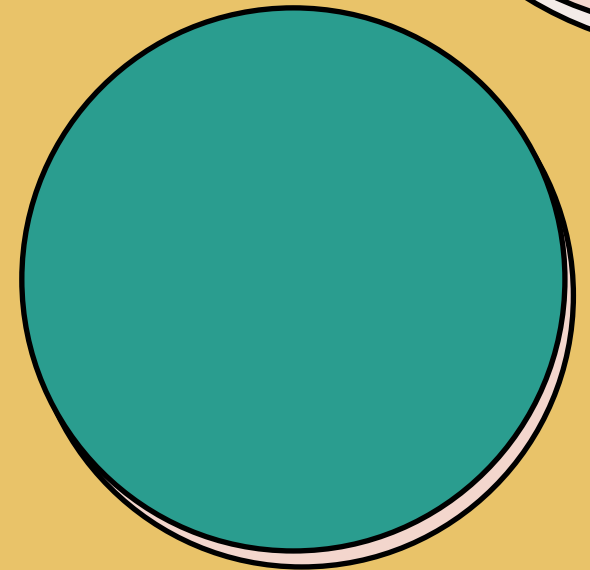
Promote Equitable Access to opportunities – opportunities are accessible to all young people and staff, irrespective of their backgrounds

Celebrate Diversity – organize events and programs that celebrate differences and encourage youth to lead

Provide Mentorship – mentors guide, provide resources and act as positive role models



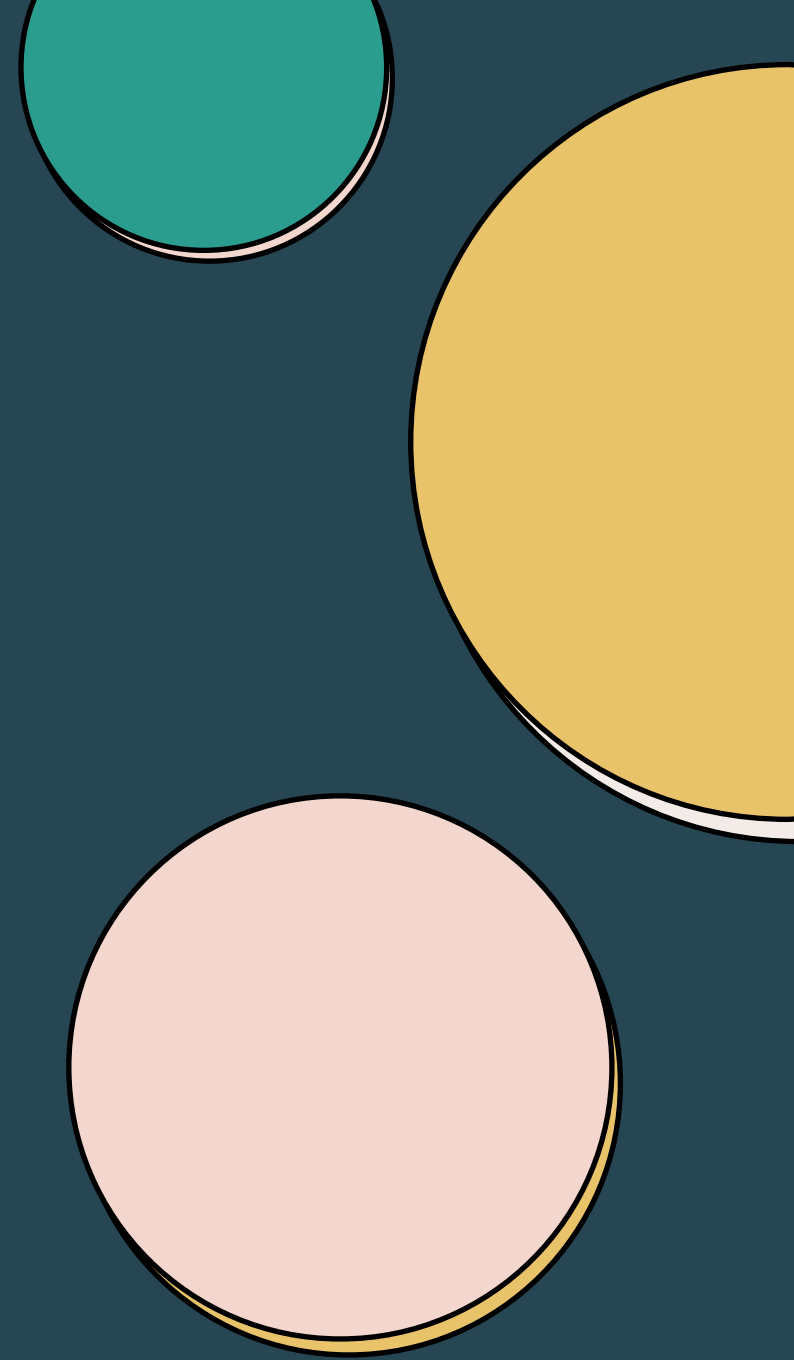
- Do not follow “cookie cutter” models.
Adapt and create programming and curriculums to be more inclusive
- **Practice cultural humility:** Be open to feedback around cultural differences and honoring all people
- **Be conscientious** in how you establish and maintain trust
- **Check yourself:** be mindful of white favoritism that leaves others behind and how it shows up in your daily life





How can we arrange and adapt services and programs that meet the needs and availability of youth's caretakers?

North Carolina Diversity





In 2044, the US Census predicts that over half of the nation's population will be people of color. Cultural competence will be a necessary skill as our country grows and changes.

NC has diverse ethnicities, languages, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and religions.

It is critical that we remember at the end of the day, we are serving *people* not numbers.

Race and Ethnicity in North Carolina

Non-Hispanic White	Largest racial group	60.7%
Non-Hispanic AA	Second largest group	21%
Hispanic		11.4%
Non-Hispanic Other		6.9%

Religion in North Carolina

Christian

69%

Other

5%

Evangelical Protestant

35%

Mainline Protestant

13%

Historically Black Protestant

11%

Catholic

7%

Latter-day Saint (Mormon)

1%

Orthodox Christian

1%

Jehovah's Witness

<1%

Other Christian

1%

Jewish

1%

Muslim

<1%

Buddhist

1%

Hindu

1%

Other world religions

<1%

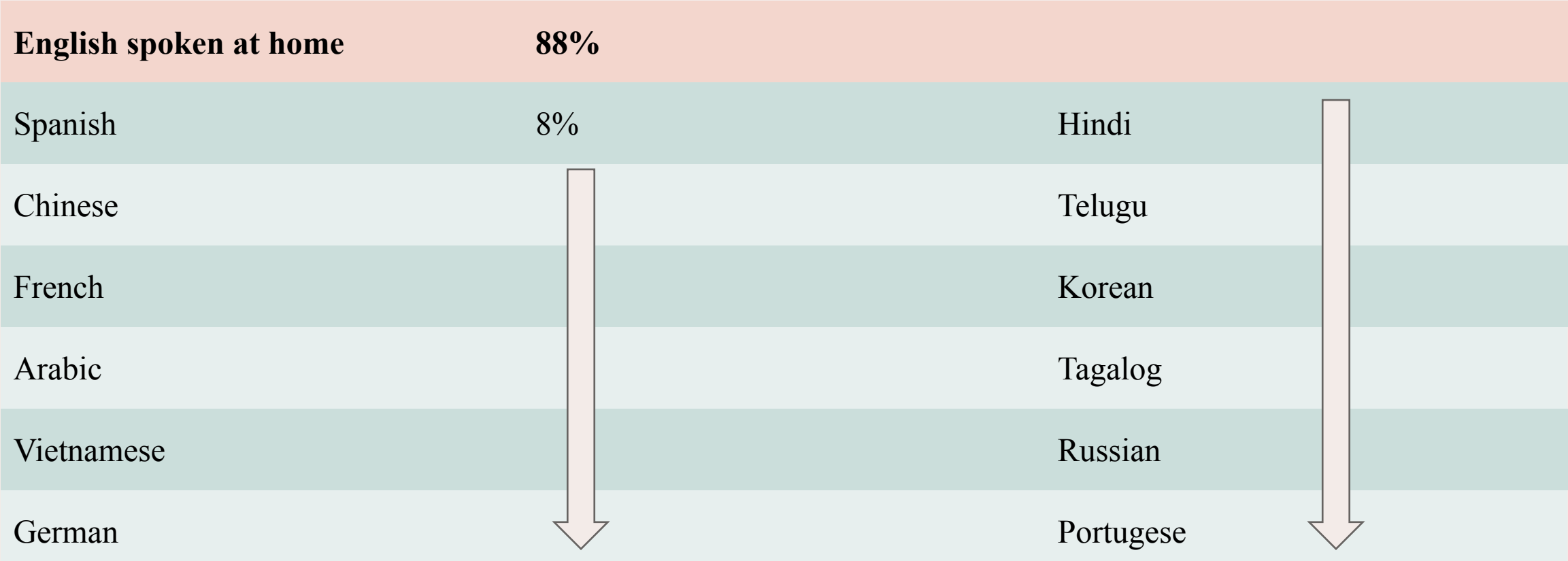
Something else

3%

Religiously unaffiliated

26%

Language in North Carolina



Socioeconomic Status in North Carolina

Poverty

Persons below the poverty line	12.8%
--------------------------------	-------

Children	18%
----------	-----

Seniors	11%
---------	-----

Sexual Orientation in North Carolina – 2011

(most recent statistics found)

There was no significant difference in race/ethnicity, educational attainment, or employment status between sexual minorities and heterosexuals.

Total	Hetero Male 97.73%	Hetero Female	98.17%
	LGBTQ Male 2.27%	LGBTQ Female	1.82%



What experience do you have supporting and learning about other cultures from the youth and adults you've worked with? How did you exercise cultural humility?

“People will forget what you said,
People will forget what you did, but
people will never forget how you
made them feel.”

- Maya Angelou

Candice Blackwell
Candice@triadrj.org

bink jones
bink@triadrj.org

Amanda Causey
Amanda@triadrj.org

Please stay connected...

Resources Used

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc.dec2019/valuing-diversity-developing-understanding-behavior>

<https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/11643-total-population-by-race-ethnicity>

<https://www.neilsberg.com/insights/north-Carolina-population-by-age/>

<https://npfy.org/blog/the-importance-of-inclusive-communities-supporting-youth-from-diverse-backgrounds/>

<https://Drexel.edu/soe/resources/student-teaching/advice/importance-or-cultural-diversity-in-classroom/>