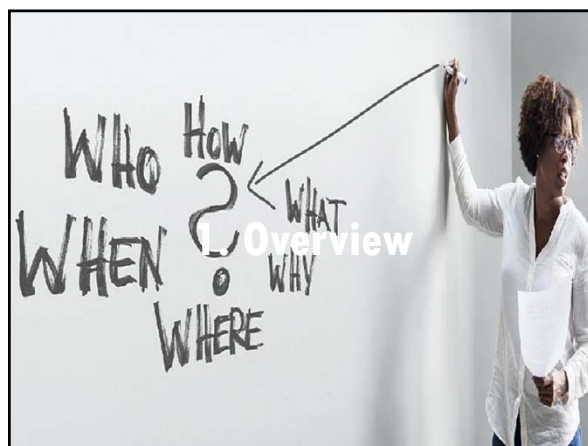# Focus on Diversity: Building Equitable and Inclusive Organizations

Presented by Jaime L. Phillips, Ph.D.
NM State Personnel Office
10th Annual NM ADR Symposium
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WHO HOW WHEN WHERE ? WHAT WHY

I. Overview

Session Map

1. DEI Overview
2. What stands in our way?
   - Unconscious bias
   - Microaggressions
3. Creating change: Using our ADR toolkit

Diversity

the range of identities and backgrounds each individual brings to the workplace, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, veteran status, education, marital status, language, age, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability or disability

Respecting and valuing these differences

Our themes for today

Perception

Communication

Poll #1

People of all backgrounds are respected, valued, and included in my agency/organization/workplace.
1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
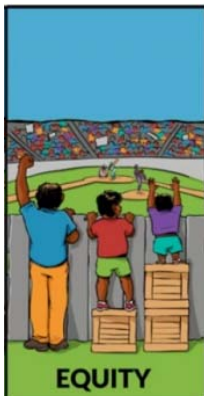4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

Equity

fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for everyone, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups

EQUALITY
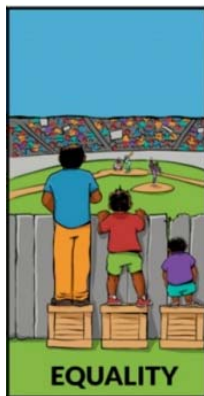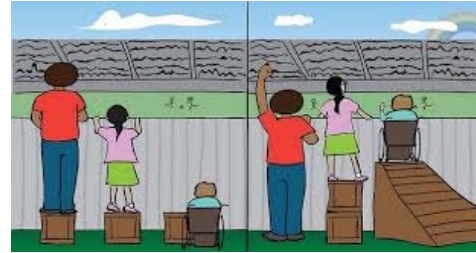
Inclusion

Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making

The achievement of a work environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organization's success
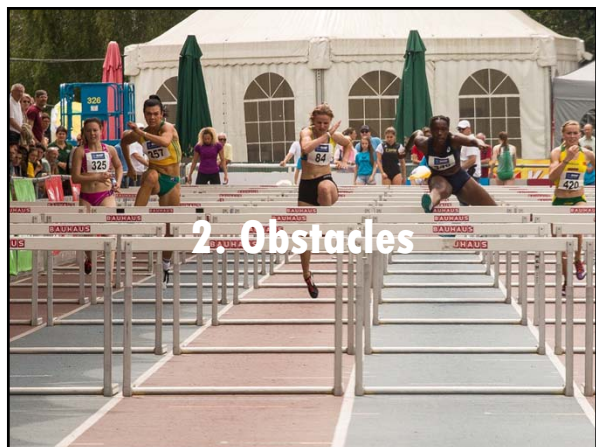

EQUITY

Why are these principles important for our organizations?

Poll #2

My agency/organization/workplace demonstrates great commitment to improving its measures of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

2. Obstacles

Implicit Bias Types

1) **Attitudes or Evaluations**
• good/bad, normal/abnormal, greater/lesser, higher status/lower status

2) **Stereotypes or Associations**
• overgeneralized belief about a social group and its members

Implicit Bias

attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious or automatic way

process of associating stereotypes or attitudes toward categories of people without our conscious awareness

Where do they come from?

"Implicit preferences for majority groups (e.g., White people) are likely common because of strong negative associations with Black people in American society. There is a long history of racial discrimination in the United States, and Black people are often portrayed negatively in culture and mass media. However, even if our attitudes and beliefs come from our culture, they are still in our own minds. Subtle psychological biases of all stripes can influence our behavior if we are not vigilant to their influence."
— Harvard Implicit Association Test

Implicit Bias: Examples

A 2016 study showed being exposed to Native American mascots leads people to associate Native Americans with being "warlike."

In 2018, a white mother called 911 on two Native American (Mohawk) brothers from Santa Cruz, NM during a college tour at Colorado State University. She thought they looked like "they don't belong, they were quiet and creepy and really stand out."

Effects of Implicit Biases

Failure to bring in the best talent

Tacit message that some are perceived as lesser

Feeling unwelcome to bring authentic selves - covering

People with may not request accommodations or make suggestions that would help them, and others, contribute to the organization

Good employees may leave

Organizations do not benefit from diversity

Maintenance of status quo

"As a white woman, my own work on implicit bias starts with myself and a look into when and how, despite my twenty-five years of working in the "equity" field, my own thoughts and decision making can be impacted by implicit bias. For example, when out for a run recently, I saw a woman who appeared to be Latina walking out of her home. The immediate thought that popped into my head was "housekeeper." I had to stop and consider, how did that happen? Regardless of my stated and lived commitment to fairness and justice, my close relationships with Latinx friends and colleagues, and my knowledge of implicit bias, my brain made a potentially harmful snap judgment about who someone was."

-Kathleen Osta, Managing Director, National Equity Project

Identifying our Implicit Biases

✓ Take stock of our own identities, backgrounds, and experiences: where might they lead to blind spots?

✓ Be aware that we are most likely to see the ways in which we are treated negatively, and not to see how other groups are; this is related to privilege

✓ Self-audit our decision-making

✓ Look at our society: Who has power? Whose voices are heard more?

✓ Listen to others' experiences and don't dismiss

Poll #3

I consistently work to uncover my own unconscious biases.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

A note

"in order to lead to meaningful change, any exploration of implicit bias must be situated as part of a much larger conversation about how current inequities in our institutions came to be, how they are held in place, and what our role as leaders is in perpetuating inequities despite our good intentions."
- National Equity Project

Thinking about microaggressions

Understanding microaggressions can help us understand:

In ourselves: What are our unconscious attitudes and assumptions?

In others: Why might someone react in a way that may seem disproportionate to the incident?
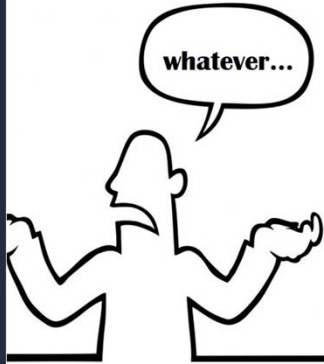
Microaggressions

Can be thought of as one of the outward manifestations of unconscious bias

Insults rooted in stereotypes that are directed at someone because of their membership in a marginalized group

Everyday, subtle interactions or behaviors that communicate some sort of bias (negativity, stereotype) toward another group

Insult and invalidation

✓ Mispronouncing someone's name
✓ Misgendering someone
✓ Using an inappropriate term to refer to someone's disability, race, country of origin, etc.

whatever...

WE MEAN MICROAGGRESSIONS.

"People mispronouncing my name triggered the same feelings in me as that classmate in kindergarten telling me I'm not supposed to be here. It made me feel like an outsider, like I'm so different my very name couldn't be understood. Somewhere along the way, I came to believe that my name *was* too hard to say correctly... Mispronunciation felt like a small price to pay when your family came here for a better life. Or so I thought.

I now realize that every time I allow someone to mispronounce my name, I postpone my belonging."

-Mejar Gujral, "The Politics of Willfully Mispronouncing a Name Like "Kamala"

3. Creating change

- Use consistent assessment criteria
- Get specific in descriptions
- Articulate your reasoning process
- Get more input on important decisions
- Add a variety of perspectives to committees
- Audit outcomes of decision-making
- Hold accountable

Overcoming Unconscious Bias in Employment Decisions

- Be aware of when unconscious bias is more likely to appear – when we're hurried or pressured, for example
- Understand the ways in which we unconsciously justify or support our own biases, such as confirmation bias
- Just saying "don't let unconscious bias affect your thinking" does not work

Overcoming our own Unconscious Bias
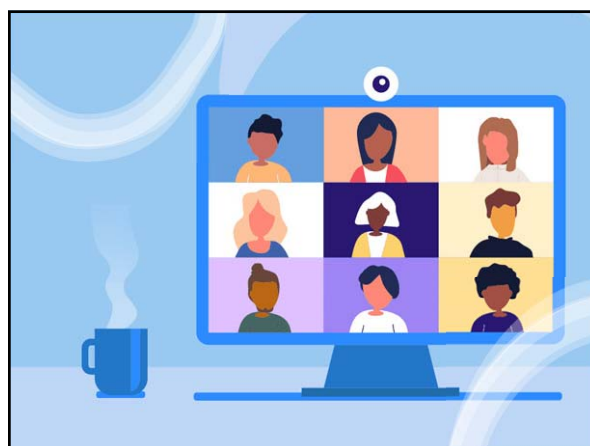
Suggestions for Addressing Microaggressions

- Just saying "that's a microaggression" may not be the most helpful approach.
- Be specific about the concern. Explain how what was said affected you and why.
- Try to help the person understand that their comment or behavior (whether well-intentioned or not) is part of a system that reinforces stereotypes and negative perceptions about a group.

Summary: Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Organizations

- An inclusive organization challenges itself to identify where implicit biases may affect thinking, decisions, and actions, and corrects for those biases.
- Microaggressions reveal the presence of biases and must be addressed as part of working toward an inclusive organization.
- Shared expectations and communication tools will be necessary for giving and receiving respectful feedback.
- Beyond interpersonal communication, policy and procedure reviews and adjustments may be necessary to create meaningful change.