




White Dominant Culture Norms
Within the Context of Governance
Recommendations

Thursday, September 14, 2023



WDC Norms

01

Either/or thinking

02

Transactional
relationships

03

Objectivity

04

Individualism

05

Quantity over
quality



“Preservation of one’s own culture does not require contempt or disrespect for other cultures.”

- César Chávez

What are WDC Norms?

The “default”

In our society, the dominant culture that shapes our institutions, media, and the way we see ourselves and each other is that of the white, middle class.

It’s the “air we breathe”

Not inherently harmful

In and of themselves, WDC norms are not harmful but when used as standards without being proactively named or chosen by the group, they can be harmful.

These norms can show up in any group or organization, whether led by white people or people of color.

Either/Or Thinking

Something or someone is either this or that

The HMIS is good or bad, useful or not useful

Our HMIS Lead/System Administrator is helpful or not helpful

Our programs are equitable or inequitable

Our homeless response system is effective or ineffective

Both/and

The HMIS is functional in some ways and there's room for improvement

Our HMIS Lead/System Administrator is supportive and there are better ways to ensure we have shared expectations on the support provided

Our programs are learning their strengths and areas for improvement in equitable service delivery

Our homeless response system is really good in some areas and has opportunities in others

Transactional Relationships

We have to be “professional”

Our system functions based on transactions

The relationships we have are based on what I can do for you and what you can do for me

Our idea of professional is that we don't acknowledge that we are whole humans and we focus only on work tasks

Transformational

Our system functions based on relationships

The relationships we have are based on how to best support people experiencing homelessness, which go beyond simple transactions

We recognize that we are whole humans with whole selves, and the people we serve are whole humans with intersecting identities

Objectivity

What gets measured gets done

Monitoring, agreements, expectations should only include things that can be easily measured

Feelings and perceptions don't matter

It's better to be detached, removed from decisions that directly impact the homeless response system

We can never be 100% objective

Monitoring, agreements, expectations should include components such as respect, person-centered approaches, inclusion

Relationships and decisions to be made within the homeless response system should include objective measures and measures that evaluate how people feel and perceive the system (i.e., is it safe, is it trauma-informed, is it culturally-humble, do people care about me)

Individualism

Value is in charismatic leaders

Work gets done and relationships are maintained because of individual, charismatic leaders that work in isolation

The homeless response system is built upon the work and relationships of a few key people that hold tremendous power and influence

Value is in community

Work gets done and relationships are built because we work as a community and collective

We function with an understanding that to change the homeless response system, it takes everyone

We are an interdependent system and acknowledge and leverage the strengths of everyone working within it

Quantity over Quality

More is better

Our system prioritizes more money, more housing, more people, more resources at the expense of understanding how our system leverages funding, housing, people, and resources

Our system focuses on how many people we serve rather than who and how we serve them

Better is better

Our system prioritizes understanding how our money, housing, people, and resources are used to support the homeless response system

Our system focuses on who we serve, how we serve them, and what disparities may exist in performance, rather than just access

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Next Steps: Review of
Recommendations within the
context of “something different”