



Intersectionality refers to how the diverse categories of our identity intersect to influence and inform the way we move through the world

You can learn more about each of these milestones and more in future newsletters.



The JEDI Steering Committee is pleased to share some milestones in Catholic Guardian Services' journey to examine and adjust its practices in order to become an organization committed to anti-oppression and anti-racism. We tend to think of the "big systemic" changes that are needed, yet every day we can do something that makes CGS a more inclusive, diverse and equitable organization.

The Steering Committee is not made up of experts on race, but of people committed to deepen our understanding of why race matters, what purpose does the social construct of race serve, how was it constructed and how are we all complicit in maintaining it and who, if anyone, benefits from it. The Steering Committee members participated in a full day workshop over 3 consecutive days with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISAB) on **Undoing Racism**. In addition, the committee is considering options to re-institute a **Racial Equity Awareness** experience at new hire orientation.

JEDI is using the **Brave Conversations Tours** as a vehicle to normalize discussions about race and to engage in more authentic conversations about race. When staff ask "what's different since the organization began its journey" one can point out that just holding space consistently to talk about race is a significant accomplishment for any organization. The opportunity to host the Brave Conversations by staff with different intersectionality – race, gender, U.S. born, foreign born, etc. – offers the possibility of new insights, explorations and understandings to each conversation.

Over 95% of the children, families and adults we work with are people of color and reside in communities that have been marginalized. The **Community Voices Workgroup** is re-examining the ways in which the agency has collected client feedback, for example satisfaction surveys, and considering ways to truly engage with our constituents' whole-selves and create more authentic partnerships. The **Family Enrichment Center**, an ACS funded community led, community-informed and community-driven offerings is a wonderful opportunity for

a different kind of community partnership. And, there's opportunity to learn so much more from the areas where the agency has prioritized lived-experience with the **Foster Parent Mentors** and **Parent Advocates** in the Family Permanency Services programs.

When the agency prioritizes lived-experiences it's able to benefit from the talents that too often get marginalized. Catholic Guardian Services, with thoughtfulness and intention, sought out women of color and artists of the spoken word to capture the soul of an updated **Mission Statement**. The poet who submitted the statement that will be presented to the Board and to the Catholic Alliance would not otherwise have had her voice heard.

"Professionalism" is often used as code to either invite or deny opportunities. Uncovering conscious and unconscious biases in how the agency recognizes, develops, advances and promotes internal talent as well as how it recruits for external talent is another area where Catholic Guardian Services is examining and adjusting its practices. The agency is using a **panel interview process** and **structured interview questions** to mitigate for bias, and is in development for a **Leadership Incubator program** that, as one of its main focuses, examines how unconscious bias is manifested along multiple points in decision-making that influence outcomes.

The agency's incremental advances are experienced most profoundly by those who are involved in those advances so, as Mahatma Gandhi said, "be the change you want to see". If you want to be a part of the change, email JEDI@catholicguardian.org.