Framing Community Engagement:
A Health Equity Approach

Angel Smith,
Health Equity and Community Engagement Specialist, Prevention Services Division
OBJECTIVES

1) Understand systems of oppression

1) Know how to utilize health equity strategies in community engagement work

1) Analyze Role in health equity and community engagement
Level Setting
➢ **Equity**- When everyone, regardless of who they are or where they come from has the opportunity to thrive. This requires eliminating barriers like poverty and repairing injustices in systems such as education, health, criminal justice and transportation.  

*Source: Colorado Office of Health Equity*

**Definitions**

➢ **Oppression** - The systematic mistreatment of the powerless by the powerful, resulting in the targeting of certain groups within the society for less of its benefits - involves a subtle devaluing or non-acceptance of the powerless group - may be economic, political, social, and/or psychological. Oppression also includes the belief of superiority or “righteousness” of the group in power. **Source:** world-trust.org
Definitions

➢ **Power** - The ability to change, define, manipulate and control

➢ **Inclusion** - is a sense of belonging, which allows people to engage and contribute within an environment (the key to reaping the benefits of diversity). *Source: Kira Banks, Forward Through Ferguson*

➢ **Critical Consciousness** - is the ability to critically analyze systems of oppression to better understand the ways in which they shape our realities
Level Setting
ORIGINS OF CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS THEORY

- Paulo Freire
  - Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Based in Marxism
- Frantz Fanon’s “Wretched of the Earth”
  - The power of language, revolution, the role of the intellectual
Themes

- Rejection of the Banking Approach
  - Communities [students] are not empty vessels, and we [teachers] do not know all
  - We should instead have co-creation of knowledge
- Systems of oppression are reinforced and reproduced
  - Oppressor and oppressed
THEMES

- Move away from mimicry and opposition only stances
- Urges everyone to be critical of oppressive structures
- We should also think about the ways in which they interact with these structures (this helps us understand that X is not our fault and figure out ways to navigate through/over/around barriers)
Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion.

— Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed
How does this relate?
Oppression - The systematic mistreatment of the powerless by the powerful, resulting in the targeting of certain groups within the society for less of its benefits - involves a subtle devaluing or non-acceptance of the powerless group - may be economic, political, social, and/or psychological. Oppression also includes the belief of superiority or “righteousness” of the group in power. Source: world-trust.org
SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

➢ Governing Structures
  ○ Courts
  ○ Politicians
  ○ Law Enforcement
  ○ State and local departments

➢ Economics

➢ Education

➢ Language and images
What does this mean for our work?

We need to ask more questions!
QUESTIONS WE CAN ASK OURSELVES

➢ What am I feeling?
➢ Are my thoughts about _____ upholding my truths?
➢ To what extent are my thoughts and beliefs accurate?
➢ Am I challenging preconceived notions of “good/bad” success/failure?
➢ In what spaces and when surrounded by whom do I feel the most comfortable?
QUESTIONS I CAN ASK IN MY WORK

➢ Have I sought out input from historically marginalized populations?
➢ What groups might be harmed? How and why?
➢ Are there other ways this project can be done?
➢ What policies do we have that support inclusion?
➢ Where on the community engagement continuum is my work?
WAYS TO MOVE TOWARD BALANCE

➢ Always get a third opinion
➢ Get out of siloes
➢ Constantly check in with your emotions
➢ Make connections with community members
➢ Take training further, look at action plans, grants, etc. and ask questions
➢ Share the power with those who you (may) have not historically
COLORADO’S YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CONTINUUM

Increasing level of community involvement, impact, trust, and communication flow

Increasing ownership, empowerment, skills, opportunities, and supports of both staff and young people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>Consult</td>
<td>Collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication flows from the program or initiative to inform and/or serve young people.</td>
<td>Young people provide one-time or periodic feedback.</td>
<td>Young people influence decision-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome: To establish communication and outreach channels, while sharing information and providing services to young people.</td>
<td>Outcome: To develop connections and learn about the needs, interests and perspectives of young people.</td>
<td>Young people share power and responsibility with adults in making decisions together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve</td>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>Share leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication flows both ways and young people provide ongoing participation.</td>
<td>Young people influence decision-making.</td>
<td>Outcome: Increased trust and partnership building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome: To initiate partnership and increased cooperation between young people and adults.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome: A strong partnership between young people and adults with bidirectional trust that affects broader community health outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Family Leadership Training Institute

The Basics

➢ Non-partisan training institute

➢ 20 week course with 12 (14 in 2019) active sites

➢ Recognizes community members’ inherent power

➢ Centers civic engagement
PRESENCE OF FLTI IN COLORADO OVER TIME

COLOR KEY, INDICATING STATUS AS OF AUGUST 2018:

- Active Adult Site
- Inactive Site
- Active 2Gen Site
- Adult Site, Implementing in 2019

Sites with split coloring indicate previously active 2Gen programming, but will be inactive for 2018-19.
Other Resources

➢ deBeaumont Foundation’s *Building Skills for a More Strategic Public Health Workforce*

➢ University of Southern California’s *Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power, and Privilege*

➢ National Family Support Network’s *Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support*
THANKS!

Angel Smith

angel.smith@state.co.us