

Values are beliefs that influence our opinions, attitudes, actions and the choices and decisions we make. As humans, we all have the same needs but hold different beliefs about how to get what we value. Our values shape our relationships, our behaviors, our choices, and our sense of who we are.

In organizational and broader community efforts, too often values and principles are formed and then put on a shelf or forgotten. For many organizations and agencies there is a contradiction between the values held and the way day to day business is done. For example, if we truly believe in the importance of community participation, this value will profoundly affect how we work together towards action and change. Holding to this value will mean that we will create opportunities to ensure that community members have a voice in developing services and supports. Many organizations and governments hold this value in principle, but do not reflect this value in their day to day decision making and work.

Developing a set of shared community values will also facilitate the success of diverse individuals working together for change. When there is recognition of shared values, then individuals can trust that all people in the community group will act and make decisions based on the shared values of the community. If conflicts arise, it can usually be alleviated through grounding the issue in relation to the shared values agreed upon by the group.

In organizations or groups, values help us make policies, procedures and strategies and guide the development of relationships and interactions. Values provide a reference point for all things to happen. Give life to your values! Remember - people may not believe what you say, but they will always believe what you do. Values are a living statement of what we will do and how we will do it. It is far more meaningful to behave consistently with your values than to just talk about them.

As an organization or group you should:

- Identify your common core values
- Identify how the common core values will be reflected in your interactions and work
- Model the common core values during all interactions
- Refrain from actions and interventions that violate your common core values
- Evaluate how you are doing on a regular basis

Remember.....

- Not everyone will agree on every value but you can move ahead with what you agree on
- At very least you need to hear and strive to understand each other

Values Give Life to Your Policies and Actions!

Through the CARS value based approach we have learned:

- Every community that wishes to develop a network of services and supports sooner or later comes face to face with the same challenge. That challenge is to bring about public policy change that supports and recognizes all people, families, children and youth as whole units, instead of viewing them from the perspective of fragmented, separated and often isolated policies, funding streams and services.
- You can't achieve effective community participation unless you start with the issues community members are really concerned about. This requires a realization that personal need plays a vital role in mobilizing people for action and change
- Communities must realize that values such as responsive, accessible and inclusive are not defined by political legislation, policies or programs but rather by a community's willingness to recognize, value, listen and respond to each of its community members.
- Value based community mobilization allows participants to travel beyond service delivery boundaries, funding criteria, government mandates, staffing components, regulations, and legislation when defining their needs.

Often it is the government who is driving community development by virtue of government policies and funding initiatives. This has led to community needs having to fit into public policy development rather than public policy development having to fit community needs, especially in rural remote and northern communities. Government's role **should be** to provide communities with "**access**" to necessary programs/funding and "**opportunities**" to meet key indicators of success in a manner that is "**responsive**" to their local community

Value based community development is consumer focused, providing opportunities for the community to influence how services are provided and what they will look like. The process focuses on supporting individual growth, family capacity and supportive communities. Remember these steps in developing your community values:

1. Get participants to individually articulate what values they feel are implied in the common community vision
2. Identify the similarities in the individual points of view
3. Get participants to agree to set aside differences in their individual values and move forward on points of agreement
4. Develop and agree to a written set of common values that will guide the progress towards achieving the community vision
5. Put the set of common community values to use when making ongoing decisions regarding all aspects of their community development process



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