

CASE STUDY 1*continued*

cultural differences for the provision of client services. Especially relevant was knowledge of normal vs. dysfunctional family patterns within different cultural groups so that culturally sensitive and accurate assessments might be carried out. In moving towards a family support model within the agency, as was indicated by several staff members during our interviews, it is critical to understand family dynamics of a given family from the perspective of its culture of origin as opposed to a singular, monocultural Euro-American perspective. Also evident was a basic conflict within the organization between treatment and corrections models of providing services. Staff adhering to the latter tended to devalue the importance of cultural differences in working with Clients of Color and tended to see Youth of Color as using racism and cultural differences as an excuse for not taking responsibility for their own behavior.

White staff members report the following needs and concerns in regard to working with Children of Color: need help in identifying culturally appropriate resources and placements; discomfort in dealing with issues of race; don't know the right questions to ask; families often unwilling to discuss or acknowledge race as an issue; the need for more and better training; lack of knowledge about biracial children; and the need for a better understanding of the role of culture in the service model they use.

Staff of Color did not report any experiences of overt discrimination and felt respected by their colleagues. They believed that Agency X was, in fact, trying to deal with the problem of cultural diversity, but that this interest was of rather recent vintage and motivated primarily by political and legal concerns. They also suggested that the liberal climate of the organization did much to justify a pervasive attitude that "we treat everyone the same" and "I know good service provision and can deal with anyone." Together, such attitudes often served as an excuse for not dealing directly with cultural differences in clients. They also stated that cultural diversity was experienced by some co-workers as an extra burden, requiring extra work from them. As in most work situations, the Staff of Color did experience some distance from co-workers. The onus of keeping up good relations was often felt to be on the Person of Color to put their White co-workers at ease. Staff of Color we interviewed were subject to especially high burnout potential and needed their own resources and support outside the organization. We found both Staff of Color in the units under investigation to be especially strong and competent individuals who were particularly stretched thin between their regular duties and their roles within the organization as cultural experts.

The recent hiring of a Latino professional by Agency X, as a means of dealing with a growing Spanish-speaking population, deserves some comment. The need to provide services to this population has been well documented by the demand that has already arisen for his services. We are concerned, however, that the way in which the position was created will eventually lead to burnout and failure and that much more support for the position must be consciously and systematically provided. We perceive an expectation from within and from outside the organization that this individual will be able to "do it all"—help organize an advisory board and provide services to it, do outreach to the Latino/a community, be an in-house cultural expert, be an advocate with other agencies and a referral source for all Latino/a members of the community, and carry a full caseload of Latino/a and non-Latino/a families. The work demands are already cutting into personal time, and as he deals with other agencies and realizes the lack of culturally relevant services available elsewhere, he becomes even further burdened.

continued