



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**  
Office of Family Assistance

## **The Wisdom in the Room**

### **Regions IX and X State TANF Technical Assistance Meeting**

August 29-30, 2024 • Hilton Portland Downtown Hotel • Portland, Oregon



# **Session #2: Navigating Change: A Journey to Equity and Human - Centered Culture in TANF Services**

*August 29, 2024*

*10:40 AM-12:10 PM*

# AGENDA

## Today, we will discuss:

- Introductions
- Tone Setting
- Equity and Human-Centered Culture
  - Discussion Break
- Agency & Cultural Change Recommendations
- Key Training Areas
- Opportunities
  - Discussion Break
- Audience Activity



# INTRODUCTION-1

## The Parker Perspective:

- Loving Wife and Mom
- **Hometown:** Peoria, IL
- Attended Howard University
- Senior Policy Analyst for CLASP
- Consultant & Luxury Event Planner



# INTRODUCTION-2

## Teon's Take:

- Wife & MOM
- Proud Southern Gal (NC)
- HBCU Alumna
- Artist and Writer
- Advocate for policy solutions that help advance historically marginalized communities



# Acknowledgment

## Tone-Setting

- Recognizing that each agency has unique differences and its own set of challenges
  - TANF is a contextual program
  - Staff turnover and burnout
  - Limited resources
  - Budget fluctuations
  - Changes in data systems
  - Administrative differences
  - Political climate of the state, region, or county
  - Uncertainty
- Acknowledging that simple solutions aren't always easy, but there are opportunities and low-hanging fruit to access

**SIMPLE ≠ EASY**

# Equity & Human-Centered Culture-1

## What does it mean to be Human-Centered?

- Prioritizes the **dignity, experiences, and needs** of individuals and communities directly affected by public benefit policies
- Emphasizes **genuine** engagement
- Ensuring that their voices and lived experiences are integral in decision-making
- **Key characteristics** include but are not limited to:
  - Empathy and Respect
  - Inclusive Participation
  - Narrative Change
  - Policy Responsiveness
  - Equity-Driven Design
  - Continuous Improvement and Feedback Loops
  - Service Integration
  - Transparency and Accountability

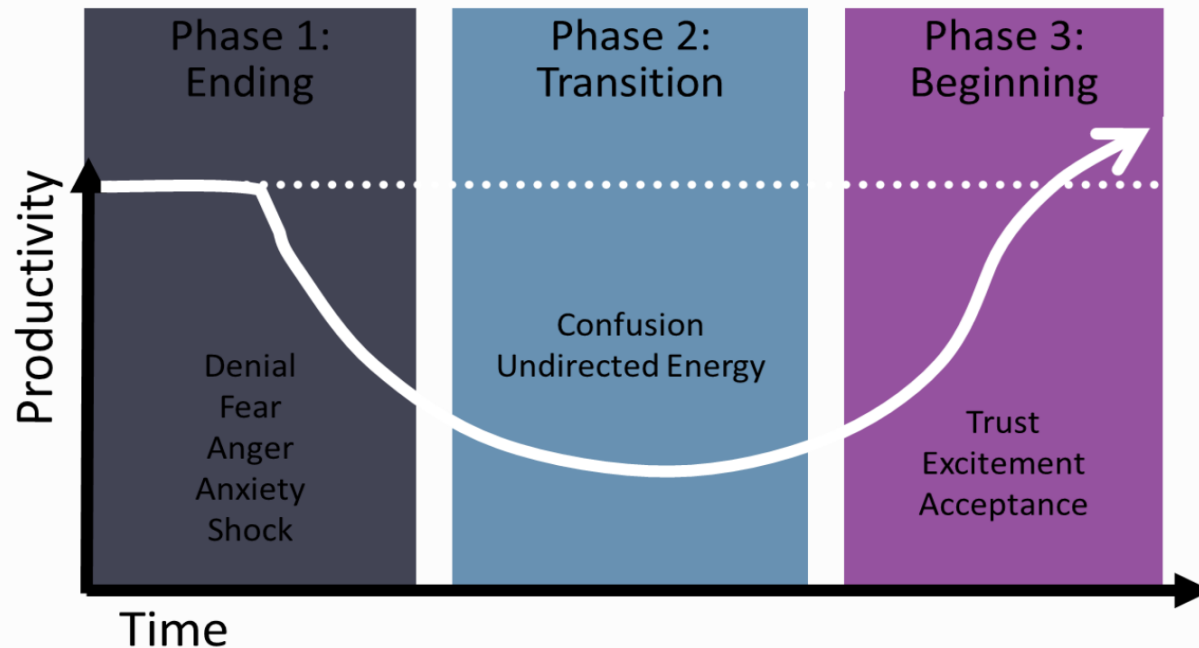
# Equity & Human-Centered Culture-2

## How to make change in an environment that may not be as ready as you are?

- We recognize that **change can be challenging** depending on the unique circumstances of your environment.
- **Factors** such as existing *infrastructure, available resources, organizational culture, and stakeholder readiness* can all influence the ease with which change can be implemented.
- **Key strategies** include but are not limited to:
  - Don't be afraid of pushback
  - Lean into the discomfort
  - Don't take it personal
  - Your team mirrors you
  - Collaboration

# Equity & Human-Centered Culture-3

How to make change in an environment that may not be as ready as you are?



**Change is not linear,  
and it requires:**

- Grit
- Perseverance
- Patience
- Grace

William Bridges Model of Change and Transition



# Equity & Human-Centered Culture-4

## Narrative Change:

- **Transforming the stories** we tell about public benefits and their users
- **Dismantling** harmful myths
- Replacing them with narratives that are **honest, equitable, empathetic, and reflective of true community needs**
  
- **Key steps** include but are not limited to:
  - Assess Current Narratives
  - Engage with Lived Experiences
  - Educate and Train
  - Revise Language and Communication
  - Promote Policy based on Equity
  - Build Inclusive Narratives
  - Monitor, Evaluate, and Adapt

# Equity & Human-Centered Culture-5

## Addressing Internal Biases:

- We **ALL** have internal biases
- Regardless of race, gender, or status, societal narratives have been perpetuated through media, word of mouth, and social conditioning.
- **We can not change what do not acknowledge**
- **Addressing internal biases** included but are not limited to:
  - Reflect on Your Own Experiences and Beliefs
  - Educate Yourself and Seek Diverse Perspectives
  - Practice Active Listening & Empathy
  - Question Stereotypes and Generalizations
  - Speak Up Against Bias
  - Accept that enlightenment is a journey

# Discussion Break-1

## 7 Minutes

- How do you personally deal with discomfort and change?
- Have you had experience with discomfort of change within your team? How did you handle it?
- What strategies would you suggest to others when transitioning through change?



# Agency & Cultural Change Recommendations

## **Transforming Agency Culture for Equity and Inclusion**

- Evaluate Agency's Culture
- Partner with Community Based Organizations
- Formalize Community Engagement
- Cultural Shifts in Practice

# Key Training Areas for DSS Agencies:

## **If you haven't already, please implement:**

- ❑ Systemic Racism and Implicit Bias Training
- ❑ Employee Engagement, Hiring Practices, and Customer Service
- ❑ Recruitment and Retention Plan
- ❑ Asset-Based, Trauma-Informed, and Inclusive Language
- ❑ Cultural Competency and Engaging with LEP Customers
- ❑ Ongoing Policy Training

# Opportunities

## Based on Upcoming TANF Changes

- **Data and Evaluation**
  - Outcome Measures Implementation
  - Follow-up Protocols
- **Feedback Mechanisms and Integration**
  - Establish and Maintain Feedback Loops
  - Use Insights for Program Refinement
- **Technical Assistance**
- **Resource Allocation**
- **Training Opportunities**
- **Enhanced Engagement Models**

# Discussion Break-2

## 7 Minutes

- Despite the challenges you face in your state, region, or county, what are some opportunities you can lean into in your own space?



# You Have The Power To Make CHANGE

## Our Deepest Fear

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, ‘Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?’

Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world.

There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking, so that other people won’t feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

As we’re liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

- Marianne Williamson



# Thank You

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# Activity-1

**Directions:** On your table, you'll find printed worksheets. Take the designated time to immerse yourself in imagination and envision your responses to the questions provided. Once the allocated time concludes, engage in a vibrant discussion with your tablemates.

Feel free to use the guiding questions as prompts to stimulate and guide your conversation. Let your collective insights and creativity flow as you explore and share ideas. Enjoy the collaborative process, and let's ignite transformative discussions!

# Activity-2

## **Step 1: Reflect on Your Concerns**

Take a moment to think about the various things that are currently on your mind related to equitable and human-centered changes within the TANF program. These could be concerns, worries, tasks, or any situations affecting your work or the communities you serve.

## **Step 2: Identify What You Can Control**

Inside the diagram, labeled "In My Control," write down the things you can directly influence at different levels.

## **Step 3: Identify What You Cannot Control**

In the diagram below, labeled "Out of My Control," write down things that are beyond your direct influence but are still relevant to consider.

## **Step 4: Review and Reflect**

Look at your circles and reflect on the distribution of items. This visual representation helps you see where you might be focusing too much energy on things outside your direct control.

# Activity-3

## Step 5: Action Planning

Based on your Circle of Control, think about actionable steps you can take to influence these areas positively. This might involve setting specific goals, creating new habits, fostering collaborations, or advocating for policy changes.

### Guiding Questions:

1. Based on the Circle of Control activity, what specific changes can you implement to center equity in your role within the TANF program once you leave this conference?
2. What are some long-term goals related to equity and human-centered changes that you plan to advocate for, even if you don't have direct influence over them?
3. How do you plan to address and overcome your own blind spots or internal biases to ensure that meaningful change can occur within your sphere of influence?
4. When faced with necessary but uncomfortable change, what strategies do you employ to navigate and embrace these challenges effectively?
5. Considering the interconnectedness of individual actions and systemic impact, how can you collaborate with others at different levels (county, state, regional, federal) to drive equitable and human-centered changes within the TANF program?

# Activity-4

## **Step 6: Commit to Shift Focus**

Make a conscious effort to shift your focus away from the things you cannot control toward what you can influence. This step is crucial for effective leadership and impact within the TANF program.

## **Step 7: Regular Review**

Revisit and update your Circle of Control regularly as you navigate changes and opportunities within the TANF landscape. Adapting to new information and evolving contexts is key to driving equitable and human-centered changes effectively.