Knowing Who You Are

Helping youth in care develop their racial and ethnic identity

Facilitator Guide
On behalf of Casey Family Programs, we want to thank you for taking the time to watch this video about the importance of helping youth in out-of-home care develop a healthy sense of racial and ethnic identity. We, along with many others, believe that the issues raised in the video represent important aspects of development that require our concerted effort and attention for each youth’s ongoing sense of self, security and well-being. Knowing Who You Are was designed as a positive first step in helping social workers, social work supervisors, and child welfare administrators increase their awareness of this issue.

It is our hope that this video provides the catalyst for inspiring courageous conversations and ultimately helping youth in care develop a healthy perspective and vision about their racial and ethnic identity.

If you have any questions about this video or the accompanying materials, or would like to speak with someone further about the Knowing Who You Are... Helping Youth in Care Develop their Racial and Ethnic Identity project, contact productsupport@casey.org.

— Holly Merz & Malcolm Hightower
Producers

- Examine the realities of how race and ethnicity play out in our society, especially within institutions such as the child welfare, education, and health care systems.
- Begin to develop skills for talking about race and ethnicity, addressing racism and discrimination, and integrating this new knowledge and these skills into day-to-day practice.

In-Person Learning Event
The format of the in-person learning event is to support further exploration and honing of the knowledge and skills acquired in the video and e-learning. In addition to staff participation, the two-day in-person event may also include youth, alumni, resource family members and birth parents as participants. It is intended to provide a safe environment in which participants can observe, reflect, practice, and integrate knowledge and skills into day-to-day practice.

“You know, young people, social workers, foster families, everybody, we can’t be afraid of it, because that’s what is going to make a difference [addressing this issue]. And that’s what is going to change things. We have to take it one step at a time, but I know there is strength in everybody. We’ve just got to find ways to bring it to the surface, and talk about it, and not be afraid.”

— Pamela, Birth Parent
Additional Activities and Opportunities

Viewing the video Knowing Who You Are is just one of many steps in the journey towards understanding the importance of racial and ethnic identity formation, both as a social worker or other staff member for youth in care. Organizations and groups are encouraged to dig deeper into understanding racial and ethnic identity as well as the many issues that relate to this work.

In addition to participating in the online e-learning course and the in-person learning events described below, there are also many other opportunities that exist to grow and develop knowledge and skills in this area:

- Look for opportunities within your community and workplace to discuss the topics raised in this video and identify events, workshops and classes that might help to further grow and develop skills.
- Find out about local and national conferences addressing topics such as institutional racism, white privilege, anti-racism, etc.
- Surf the Web. There are a number of good resources, articles, tools, quizzes, discussion groups, etc. that can be accessed online.

E-learning Course

The focus of this interactive, self-paced online course is to assist participants in developing the knowledge and skills needed to effectively help youth in care achieve a positive and healthy sense of racial and ethnic identity. The course, which can be found at www.casey.org, provides participants with opportunities to:

- Explore their own racial and ethnic identity, their assumptions and biases, and the influences affecting how they view themselves and others.

Recommended Use

To maximize the benefit of Knowing Who You Are, the video should be introduced by a facilitator or group leader who can provide background information and context about the video as well as the subject of racial and ethnic identity in general. This is especially important in group settings where a variety of perspectives and experiences may be represented.

Following the video, we recommend providing viewers with an opportunity to discuss and explore their thoughts and reactions about the issues presented in the video. To assist in these activities, we have included a Facilitator Guide and a Viewer Guide, which contain information designed to inspire dialogue as well as to bring out key points about race and ethnicity.

The Facilitator Guide contains:

- Information about the role of the facilitator
- Things to think about before viewing the video
- Group discussion questions for use after the video is shown

The Viewer Guide contains:

- Definitions and descriptions related to racial and ethnic identity
- Background information about the Knowing Who You Are project
- Suggestions for additional activities and opportunities related to racial and ethnic identity

The Viewer Guide may be used as a tool for the facilitator or can be given to participants as a handout. For a PDF version of the Viewer Guide, go to www.casey.org.
Video/DVD Overview

We believe that this 24-minute video is a powerful tool to help those working with youth in care discuss and learn about racial and ethnic identity formation. The *Knowing Who You Are* materials also address related topics, including racism, white privilege and diversity.

We hope that showing the video and facilitating a discussion in your organization will serve as a catalyst to:

- Begin developing a common framework for learning about racial and ethnic identity formation and, in particular, its impact on youth in out-of-home care
- Open a healthy dialogue about racial and ethnic identity formation
- Promote conversations related to topics that previously may have been ignored or considered uncomfortable
- Illustrate some of the overt and subtle ways that prejudice and racism undermine an individual’s sense of self
- Underscore the particular challenges faced by youth in care, who are often disconnected from those who might help them to address and work through these devastating realities.
- Initiate discussion about the role that individuals and organizations, particularly social workers and others in the child welfare system, can play in supporting the development of healthy racial and ethnic identity formation for youth in care.

“Race matters. We can’t be afraid to talk about it. We must bring it to the surface and not be afraid.”

— Chiemi, Child Welfare Administrator

More information about the e-learning course and the in-person learning event is provided under Additional Activities and Opportunities at the end of this guide, along with additional follow-up opportunities.

**Project Background**

In July, 2004, thirty people representing a variety of races, ethnicities, experiences, and roles in the child welfare system—including youth currently in care, young adults who were previously in care, foster parents, biological parents, social workers, and other child welfare professionals—came together to build upon existing work regarding racial and ethnic identity development for youth in care. The groups’ task was to identify, from their own understanding and unique viewpoint, the knowledge, skills, and supports social workers would need to address racial and ethnic identity formation for all youth in care.

Their experiences, which were shared openly and honestly, formed the foundation of this entire project. Beginning with a call to action for social workers and other staff to commit to helping youth in care reach a developmentally appropriate, positive, and healthy sense of racial and ethnic identity, the project evolved as it took on a greater sense of purpose.

The participants increasingly realized that, in order for social workers to assist youth in exploring and developing a healthy sense of their own identity, it was also essential for the workers to arrive at some level of understanding and awareness regarding their own individual racial and ethnic identity.

This essential outcome demonstrated recognition that this work is not only important, but imperative to the success of youth, their identity, and their development as a whole.
**Target Audience**

The target audience for *Knowing Who You Are* is social workers in the child welfare system, including those working directly with youth as well as social work supervisors and administrators in both public and private organizations. Since the responsibility for helping youth explore this part of their identity does not solely reside with social workers, others who interact with youth in care will also find this video beneficial.

It is our hope that, after watching this video, many of you will ask: “What’s next?” “How do I begin to do this work?” “How can I make a difference in the life of a child?” The other two components of this project may help you understand how.

**The Remaining Two Components**

To ensure opportunity for increased learning, two other project components have been developed to complement the *Knowing Who You Are* video portion of this project. These components include an online e-learning (Web-based course) and an in-person learning event. (See page 9 for more details).

These components provide participants with more in-depth information, knowledge, and skills necessary for incorporating this work into day-to-day practice. In addition, both components emphasize the journey that those working with youth must take into their own personal racial and ethnic identity in order to be able to assist youth doing the same.

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**Viewer Guide**

**Key Aspects of Racial and Ethnic Identity**

• Racial and Ethnic Pride
• Multicultural Competence
• Preparation for Racism and Discrimination

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**Facilitator Guide**

**Prior to Presentation**

• View the video.
• Become familiar with the discussion questions and "Food for Thought" information provided.
• Obtain and understand background information about racial and ethnic identity.
• Know and understand your own reactions to the video so as not to process your emotions at the same time that you are trying to facilitate a discussion.
• Participate in the online e-learning course and the in-person learning event (discussed in the Viewer Guide) prior to facilitating a viewing and discussion of this video, whenever possible.

**Presentation Considerations**

• Determine audience participants—the questions and materials have been written for social workers, social worker supervisors, administrators, etc.
• Adjust the debrief questions for groups comprised of those other than social work staff or administrators so questions are suitable and inclusive of all present.
• Create or develop some “Food for Thought” questions for participants to consider prior to viewing the video, when presented.
• Determine the structure for the post-viewing discussion, e.g., small or large groups.
Facilitator Guide

Show Time
• Introduce the video to the audience.
• Provide background information regarding the video.
• Introduce the topic of racial and ethnic identity.
• Share the expectations or reasons why the organization or agency has chosen to use these materials.
• Introduce “food for thought” questions prior to showing the video.

After The Show
• Leave adequate time for discussion.
• Review and discuss the “Food for Thought” questions below.
• Use sample post-viewing discussion questions and/or those developed by your agency or organization.
• Be prepared for a variety of thoughts and reactions to the video content, as it will raise issues and questions.

Food for Thought
Beyond sharing background information, you may significantly increase the impact of your post-video discussion by asking participants to examine their ideas about racial and ethnic identity formation before starting the film. To help participants reflect on their experiences as well as those highlighted in the video, the following prompts may be used:

Food for Thought: Racial and ethnic identity formation is an important part of human development and is a part of our overall identity formation. It is influenced by childhood and school-age

What does a healthy racial and ethnic identity look like?
A healthy sense of racial and ethnic identity is exemplified by an individual who:
• Identifies as a member of a particular racial/ethnic group or groups;
• Has a generally positive attitudes about being a member of that group, but also has a balanced view of the strengths and challenges associated with it;
• Affiliates with members of his or her own group but is also generally accepting of people from other groups; and
• Is able to cope successfully with perceived or real racism and discrimination and has possibly shown some effective strategies for dealing with it.

Why Here—Why Now?
Knowing Who You Are—The Video/DVD
The Knowing Who You Are video was developed to raise awareness about the importance of helping youth in care develop their racial and ethnic identity. This video is the first component of a three-part project. The intent of the video serves as a call to action for those who work with youth to understand why racial and ethnic identity matters, the impact that it has on youth when it is not addressed, and why it is especially important for us to attend to with youth who are in out-of-home care. The ultimate goal of the video is to give those working in the child welfare system a place to begin thinking and learning more about racial and ethnic identity. It also relates to the work being done with youth in care where the end result becomes a commitment (or at least a willingness) to explore how this work can be integrated into day-to-day practice.
within a number of major dimensions, including religious affiliation, occupation, social class, gender, immigration status, sexual orientation, and race and ethnicity. Some of these identities are to be kept, nurtured, and committed to over a lifetime. Others are worn briefly and discarded.

While all aspects of identity development are critical, one area that is often overlooked, especially for youth in out of home care, is racial and ethnic identity. Issues of disproportionality and disparate outcomes for youth of color, the high number of multiracial youth in care, and the prevalence of cross-cultural placements in the field of child welfare cannot be ignored. Coupled with the realities of society regarding ever-changing demographics and, more importantly, the impact of race and ethnicity on how individuals are viewed, this aspect of identity cannot be neglected.

We all want positive outcomes for youth in out-of-home care. Unfortunately, all too often, youth are separated from their families and communities, both of which are primary sources of experience and understanding for youth about racial and ethnic identity. Without these anchors, many youth identify instead with the culture of foster care and feel forced to adapt and change who they are based on their living situation.

Development of a healthy racial and ethnic identity can help youth establish consistency in their life with regard to how they view themselves and can be an important anchor from which positive outcomes are possible.

As a system of social workers and organizations, we must understand why racial and ethnic identity matters. We must make sure that youth in care have ample support and opportunities for exploring this important aspect of themselves.

experiences. Racial and ethnic identity comes to the forefront during adolescence and continues throughout our lifetime. Ultimately it affects how we see ourselves and our group membership within the context of a multicultural society.

**Watch for:** While viewing the video, watch to see how Olivia’s racial and ethnic identity journey unfolds and what impacts or influences she had in this area of her life.

**Food for thought:** Talking about race, ethnicity, racism, oppression, prejudice, stereotypes, power and privilege can be uncomfortable. It is necessary, however, especially if we want to help youth develop their racial and ethnic identity and also work towards a society that works against oppression and racism.

**Watch for:** Throughout the video, various participants describe their experiences with these issues. Watch and listen to see what type of emotional impact these experiences have on them.

**Food for thought:** Racial and ethnic identity work can and should be integrated into day-to-day practice. It is not something that can be adequately addressed in one or two visits or conversations with youth. We need to look at it in the context of every aspect of each youth’s life—where they live, how it affects them at school and in their community, their connections to birth family, their access to mentors and role models who they can relate to, the messages they may be hearing, etc.

**Watch for:** Note how Mary, Marquita’s social worker, integrates issues of racial and ethnic formation into her conversations with Marquita.
Post-Viewing Discussion Structure and Questions

Based upon the number of participants, the facilitator may want to consider breaking up large audiences into smaller groups for discussion. After discussion, each small group can then share the conclusions they reached in their conversation with the larger group. The facilitator may want to capture the essence of each group’s experience in a collective document.

Organizations are encouraged to customize the sample questions in order to address the unique needs represented in their locations. The questions below represent an entry point to begin having courageous conversations—whether they are posed to large or small groups for discussion.

1) What are your overall impressions of the concepts brought up in the video regarding racial and ethnic identity?

2) What are the top two or three points highlighted by the film that you would want to address in your day-to-day practice or within your organization?

3) Does the film raise any concerns for you about working with youth around these issues? If so, please describe them.

4) How can you further integrate racial and ethnic identity work with youth into your day-to-day practice or within your organization?

Facilitator Guide

Racial and Ethnic Identity

The complex set of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that emanate from one’s membership in a particular racial or ethnic group.

Additional Tips and Considerations:

You can help viewers engage in deep and open inquiry by:

- Knowing who is present (in terms of role and background) and letting their interests in this topic guide the discussion.
- Being prepared for the video to possibly evoke strong emotions, both positive and negative, for some of the viewers and preparing ahead of time on how best to handle this in the context of a group discussion.
- Create a safe environment where participants know they will be heard as they share their views and opinions by establishing ground rules for the discussion.
- Encourage everyone to engage in active listening—especially when someone reacts in a way or shares an opinion that causes disagreement.

Viewer Guide

Why Racial and Ethnic Identity?

At the heart of identity formation is the “challenge of preserving one’s sense of personal continuity over time, of establishing a sense of sameness of oneself, despite the necessary changes that one must undergo in terms of redefining the self.” (Harter, 1990.) During the process of identity development, especially during adolescence, we all typically experiment with multiple selves and multiple roles.
Facilitator Guide

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