



2026 Conference

Context & Connection: Reframing Childhood Adversity

Breakout Session Four

Context Matters: Building Cultural Humility into
Your Programs and Services

Presenters: Mona Abdallah-Hijazi & Ahmed Ballout

These slides are the property of the presenters. Do not duplicate or edit without consent.

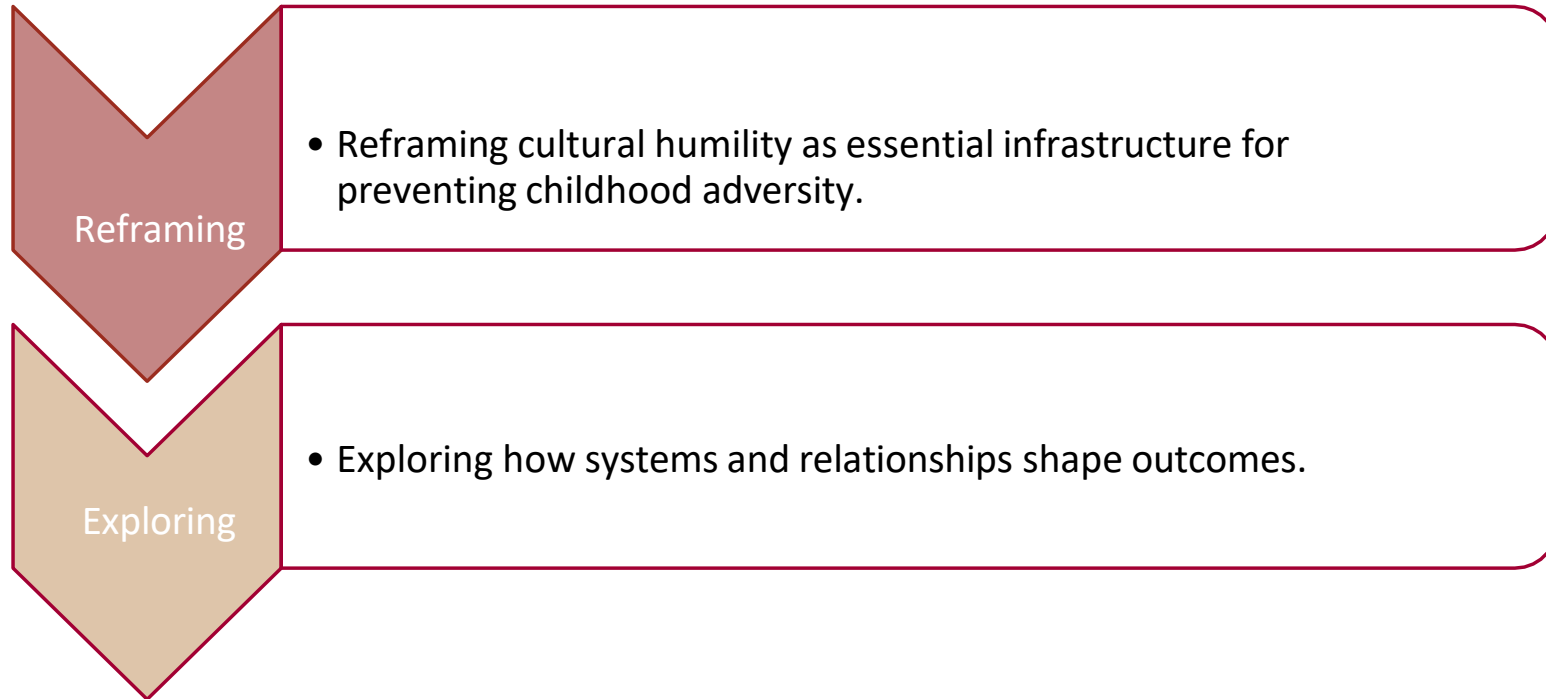


BUILDING CULTURAL HUMILITY INTO YOUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Confidential - Not for Distribution | accesscommunity.org

These slides are the property of the presenters. Do not duplicate or edit without consent.

Session Overview



These slides are the property of the presenters. Do not duplicate or edit without consent.

What is Cultural Humility?



A lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique.



Recognizing and challenging power imbalances.



Building respectful partnerships with communities.



Active listening and empathy.



Meeting people where they are.



Building authentic, consistent relationships.

Active listening and empathy

- **Active listening** means fully focusing, understanding, and responding to someone without judgment or interruption. **Empathy** is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person.
- Together, they are essential for culturally sensitive care because they help us:
- **Build trust and rapport** across different cultural backgrounds
- **Understand lived experiences** without making assumptions
- **Respect differences** in communication styles, beliefs, and values
- **Create safe spaces** where individuals feel heard, valued, and supported
- When we listen with empathy, we move beyond surface-level interactions and begin to understand the deeper impact of culture, trauma, and life experiences.

Meeting people where they are!

Meeting people where they are means engaging individuals based on their current situation, readiness, beliefs, and lived experiences—without judgment or pressure.

This approach is closely tied to **cultural sensitivity**, as it requires us to:

Respect cultural values and beliefs that shape decisions and behaviors

Acknowledge different levels of readiness for change or support

Adapt our approach to align with the individual's needs and cultural context

Build trust first, rather than forcing solutions

By meeting people where they are, we recognize that healing and growth look different for everyone—and that culture plays a key role in that journey



Building authentic, consistent relationships.

Building **authentic, consistent relationships** means showing up with honesty, reliability, and genuine care over time.

This is essential for effective, culturally sensitive work because it helps us:

Establish trust with individuals and communities

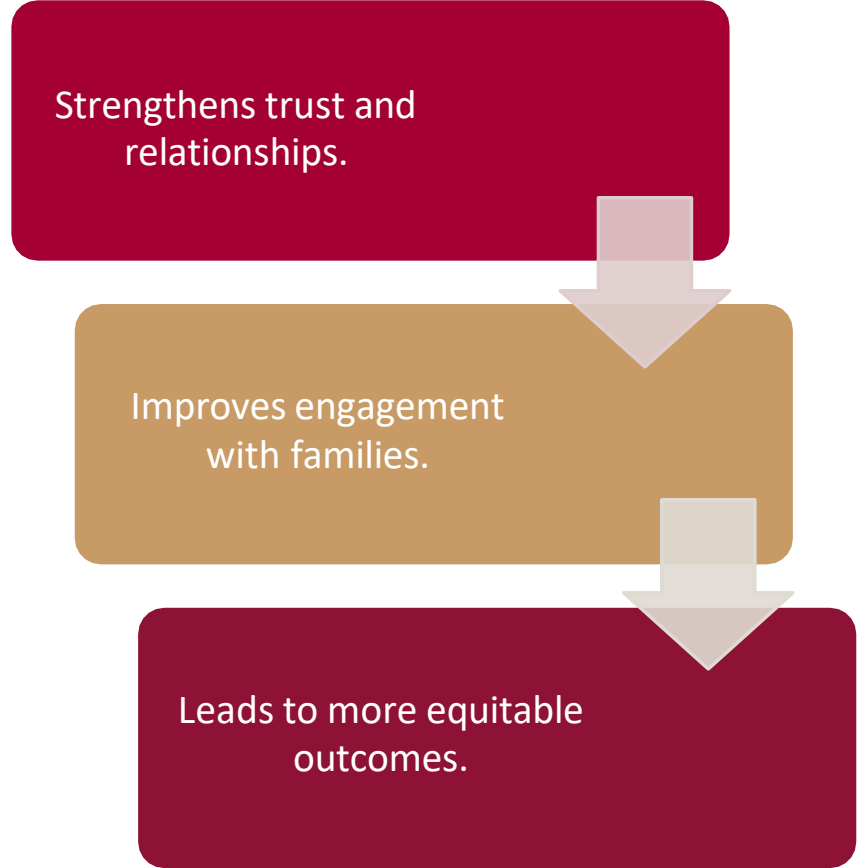
Demonstrate respect for cultural values and lived experiences

Create stability through consistent follow-up and presence

Break down barriers caused by stigma, fear, or past negative experiences

Authenticity means being real and transparent. Consistency means showing up—not just once, but over time

These slides are the property of the presenters. Do not duplicate or edit without consent.



Why It Matters

Understanding ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that occur during childhood (0–17 years), such as abuse, neglect, household dysfunction, or exposure to violence.

ACEs can disrupt healthy brain development and increase the risk of long-term challenges, including:

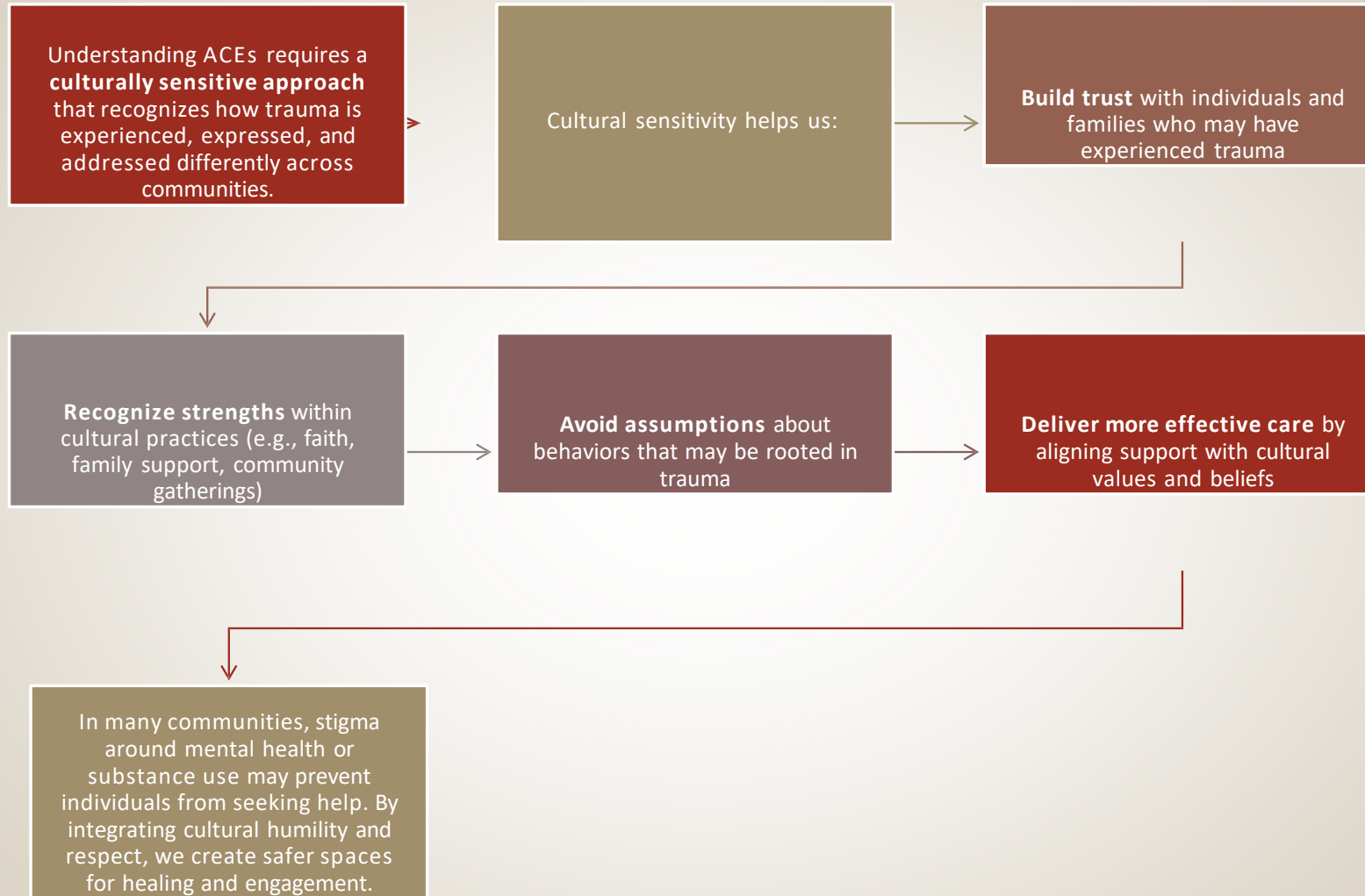
Mental health conditions (depression, anxiety)

Substance use disorders

Chronic diseases (heart disease, diabetes)

Difficulty with relationships and emotional regulation

The more ACEs an individual experiences, the greater the likelihood of negative health and social outcomes over time. However, **protective factors**—such as supportive relationships, community connection, and access to care—can significantly reduce these risks.




These slides are the property of the presenters. Do not duplicate or edit without consent.

Institutional Norms

Policies and procedures shape experiences.



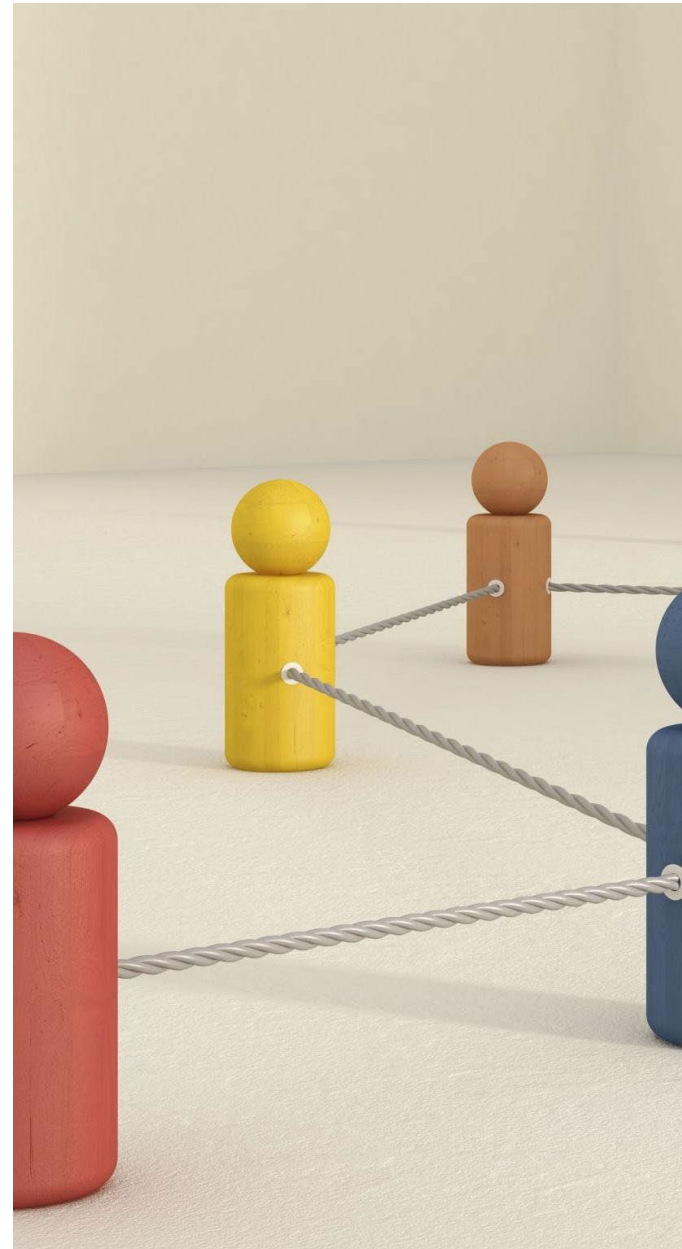
Examine how systems may unintentionally create barriers.




Shift toward inclusive, responsive practices.

Policies and procedures are not just guidelines—they directly influence how individuals experience systems, services, and support!

- **Shaping access to care and services**
- **Influencing trust in systems and providers**
- **Creating either barriers or pathways to support**
- **Reflecting (or overlooking) cultural needs and realities**
 - ✓ When policies are rigid or not culturally informed, they can unintentionally exclude or harm.
 - ✓ When they are flexible and culturally responsive, they promote equity and inclusion.



These slides are the property of the presenters. Do not duplicate or edit without consent.



Systems are often designed with good intentions—but without careful consideration, they can create **unintended barriers** that limit access and equity.

These barriers may include:

- Complex processes that are difficult to navigate
- Language and communication gaps
- Strict eligibility requirements that exclude those in need
- Lack of cultural awareness in service delivery
- Stigma embedded in policies or provider interactions
- ✓ These challenges can discourage individuals from seeking help or continuing services—especially in culturally diverse or underserved communities.

Shifting toward **inclusive, responsive practices** means actively adapting how we engage, support, and deliver services to meet the diverse needs of the communities we serve.

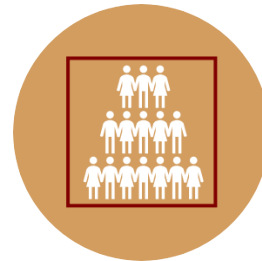
This approach involves:

- Centering the voices and experiences of individuals and communities
- Adapting services to be culturally relevant and accessible
- Recognizing and addressing inequities within systems
- Being flexible and responsive to changing needs and feedback
- Building partnerships with community leaders and trusted spaces
- ✓ Inclusive practices are not static—they require **ongoing reflection, learning, and adjustment.**

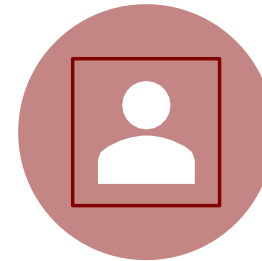
Power Sharing



CENTER COMMUNITY
VOICES IN DECISION-
MAKING.



COLLABORATE RATHER
THAN DICTATE.



VALUE LIVED
EXPERIENCE AS
EXPERTISE.

1: Centering Community Voices in Decision-Making

Centering **community voices** means actively involving those most impacted in shaping decisions, programs, and services.

This approach:

- **Elevates lived experiences** as essential insight
- **Builds trust and transparency**
- **Ensures solutions reflect real needs**
- **Strengthens community ownership and engagement**

Key Message:

- ✓ Decisions are more effective and equitable when they are made **with the community, not for the community.**

2: Collaborate Rather Than Dictate

Collaboration means working **alongside** individuals and communities as partners, rather than directing or controlling outcomes.

A collaborative approach:

- **Builds mutual respect and shared responsibility**
- **Encourages open communication and trust**
- **Leverages community strengths and knowledge**
- **Creates more sustainable and accepted solutions**

Key Message:

- ✓ **Real change happens when we shift from authority-driven approaches to partnership-based engagement.**

3: Value Lived Experience as Expertise

Lived experience is a powerful form of knowledge that provides insight beyond data and formal training.

Valuing lived experience means:

- **Recognizing individuals as experts of their own lives**
- **Incorporating personal experiences into program design and outreach**
- **Reducing stigma by honoring diverse perspectives**
- **Improving effectiveness through real-**

world insight Key Message:

- ✓ **Expertise is not only academic—lived experience brings essential knowledge that drives meaningful change.**

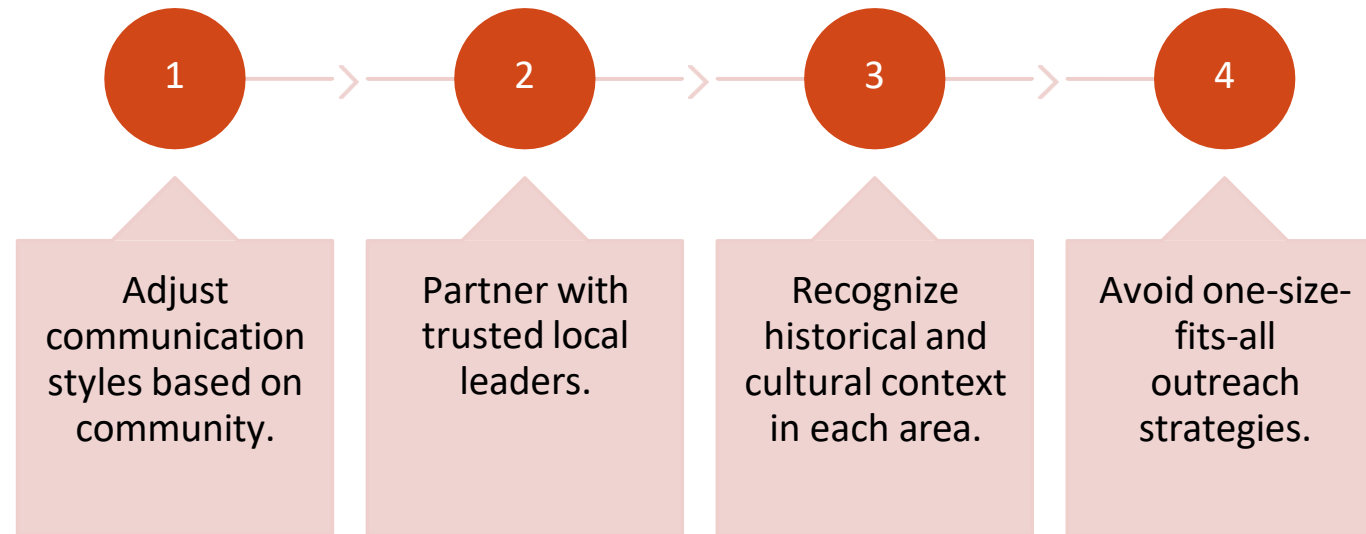


Organizational Examples

Organizations embedding cultural humility into:

- Policy
- Practice
- Leadership
- ✓ Results in stronger trust and engagement.

These slides are the property of the presenters. Do not duplicate or edit without consent.



These slides are the property of the presenters. Do not duplicate or edit without consent.

Local Context Matters

1

Quick Response Team (QRT) approaches vary by ZIP code.

2

Different communities have different needs, resources, and barriers.

3

Cultural humility helps tailor outreach and engagement strategies.

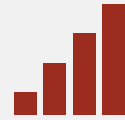
Example: Quick Response Team (QRT)

- In some ZIP codes: higher stigma, lower trust in systems.
- In others: stronger community ties and openness to services.
- Approach must adapt to cultural, social, and economic realities.



These slides are the property of the presenters. Do not duplicate or edit without consent.

Impact on Prevention



Increased connection reduces risk factors.

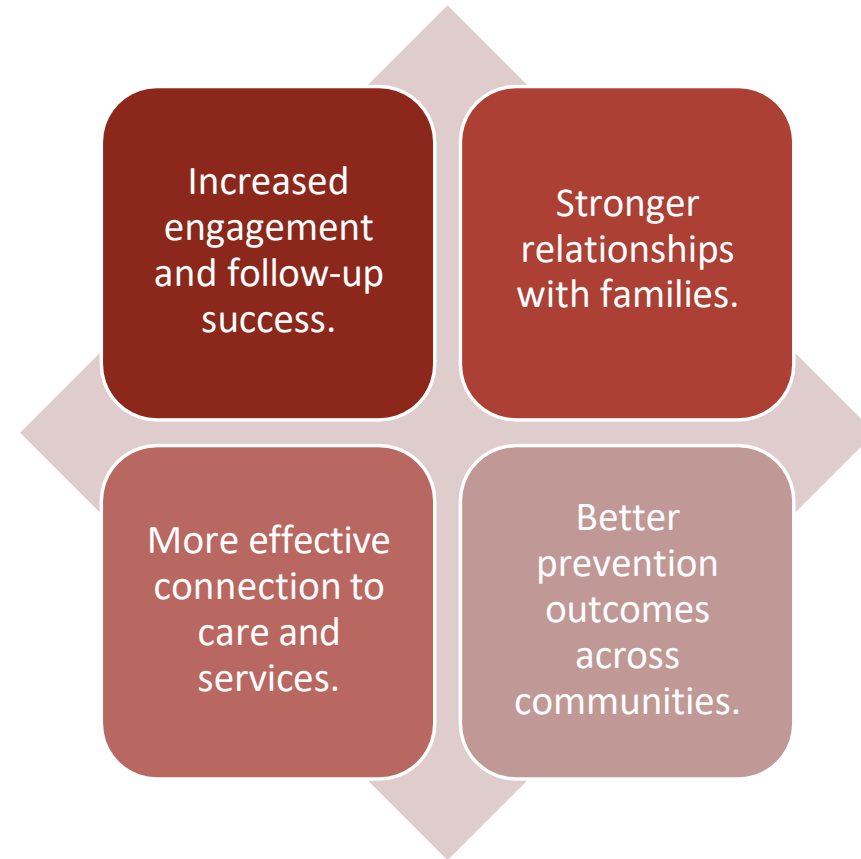


Stronger systems prevent ACEs before they occur.



Equity-driven approaches improve outcomes.

Impact of Tailored Approaches



Challenging Assumptions

- Communities may be more receptive than expected.
- Avoid assumptions about engagement or resistance.
- Approach each community with openness and respect.



These slides are the property of the presenters. Do not duplicate or edit without consent.

Lesson from the Field



Buy-in can vary in unexpected ways.



What we've seen: community response can surprise you.



Being open and authentic builds stronger connections.

Key Takeaways



Cultural humility is not optional—it's foundational.



Relationships are central to prevention.



Systems must evolve to support equity.

Local Insight: Dearborn vs. Hamtramck

COMMUNITY TURNOUT AND ENGAGEMENT DIFFER BETWEEN DEARBORN AND HAMTRAMCK.



EACH COMMUNITY HAS UNIQUE DYNAMICS, CULTURE, AND TRUST LEVELS.



TAILORING APPROACH LEADS TO BETTER PARTICIPATION AND OUTCOMES.

Discussion

How can your organization embed cultural humility?

What changes can you start today?

Key Practice

Show up with openness not assumptions.

Listen first, adapt second.

Let the community guide the approach.

Cultural humility is practiced, not assumed.



Questions?

These slides are the property of the presenters. Do not duplicate or edit without consent.