



# Ensuring Diversity in Asset-Building Efforts

Just as young people will be more successful in life if they develop a knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds (asset 34), community initiatives working on behalf of asset building need to ensure that they are intentionally inclusive of *all* members of the community. It can be easier and more comfortable to assemble people who live in similar neighborhoods, share common values and beliefs, look alike, talk alike, and think alike. However, breaking down invisible walls and working together is an important part of asset building. Building these bridges increases accessible resources and opportunities, making it more likely that all kids in our communities will get the assets they need. Here are some ideas for widening your asset-building circle:



- ✦ **Think about how you are defining your community.** Are you using geography or a shared interest? Are you leaving any groups or neighborhoods out? Are you including people who might not think of themselves as part of your community?
- ✦ **Learn as much as you can about the diversity of your community.** How many languages are spoken? How many people of different age-groups live there? What's the racial and ethnic makeup of your community? Which religions are represented? What is your community's socioeconomic makeup? What is the educational makeup?
- ✦ **Learn more about “where people are coming from”** by listening to others talk about their perspectives and opinions; reading about specific cultural traditions, histories, current issues, and communication styles; and reflecting on your own cultural roots and how they have shaped who you are.
- ✦ **Always provide copies of handouts, meeting agendas, and other information and materials in as many languages as possible.** For example, you may be able to reach out to recent Somali immigrants in your community if you translate materials and invite Somali people who speak English well to share information with others who might not otherwise be comfortable getting involved. (The list of Developmental Assets is currently available in English, Spanish, and French.)
- ✦ **Join or collaborate with existing cooperative efforts in your community** (such as interfaith or multicultural groups) and introduce those involved to the idea of Developmental Assets. Talk with them about the assets and look for ways to work together.
- ✦ **Work with human service organizations that have experience in working on cultural/racial dialogue, interfaith efforts, and other coalitions.** Implement some of their ideas to make your asset-building efforts more inclusive.
- ✦ **Consider adding asset building to various cultural events, holidays, and celebrations** in your community (such as New Year celebrations or high school graduations).
- ✦ **In addition to building diversity, also work at ways to help people build personal relationships** and have positive experiences that help them feel comfortable with people who are different from them.



- ✦ **Address people's prejudices and discomfort openly.**
- ✦ **Check to see if the people involved in partnerships are representative of the people in your community.** If not, why not?
- ✦ **Connect with media targeted at specific audiences.** For example, your community may have a radio station geared toward Native Americans, a newspaper that covers women's issues, or a television channel devoted to Hmong speakers.
- ✦ **Don't assume that people who seem to have similar characteristics see themselves as part of one group.** For example, in some communities, the term "Latino/Latina" may describe 85 percent of the community. However, individuals may identify themselves as Mexican Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, or Cuban Americans.