

# Virginia Rural Health Association

**Diversity in the Workplace:  
Understanding Differences**

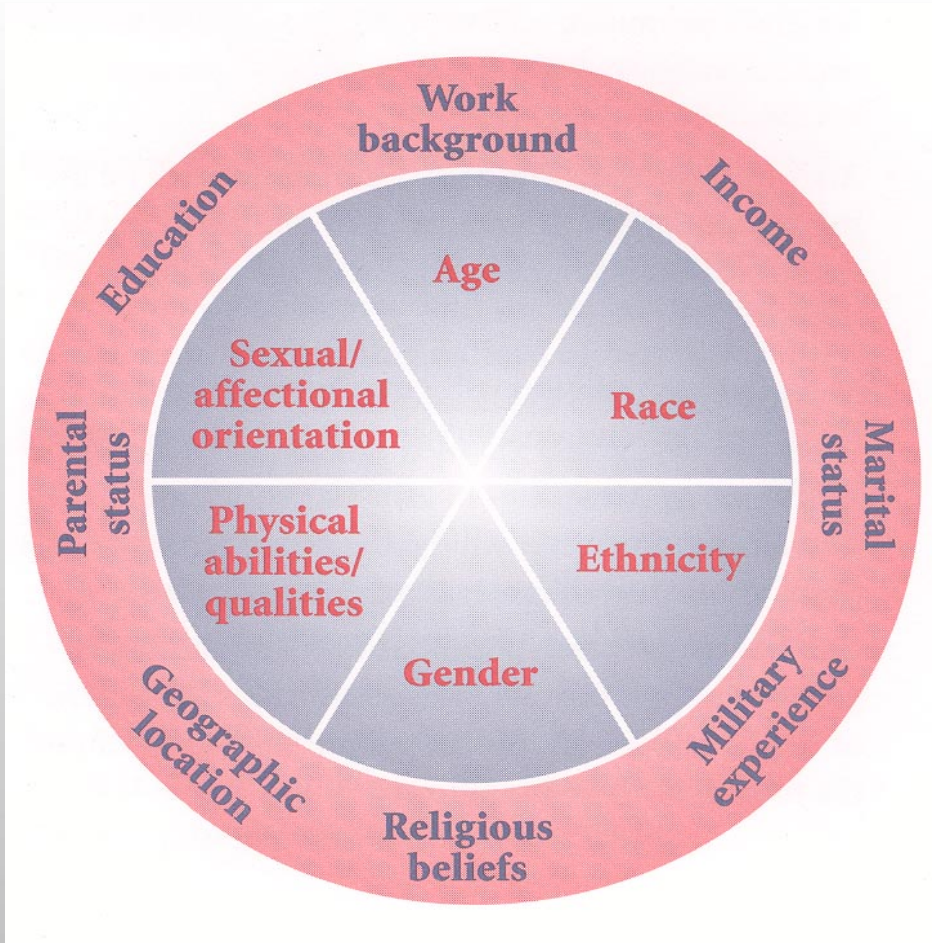
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# Opening Thought

- “If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place”  
Margaret Mead

# Dimensions of Diversity



# Diversity Awareness

- **Multidimensional**
- **Self identity and how it affects relationships with others**
- **Attitudes and perceptions**
- **Mechanisms to increase understanding**

# How Do We Change Organizational Thinking?

- **The leadership must value that a diverse workforce will encourage different approaches and perspectives. Value must be placed on variety in opinion and insight.**
- **Recognition of the opportunities and challenges that will arise within an organization.**

# How Do We Change Organizational Thinking?

- The organization must demand high standards of performance from each.
- Personal development should allow growth for the betterment of the organization.
- Expectation of openness and respect for all opinions.

# How Do We Change Organizational Thinking?

- **The need for well-articulated and widely understood mission; agreed upon expectations.**
- **Mechanism for communication among members of the organization.**
- **The Partnership Model**
  - **“Power with” rather than “Power over”**

# Resources

- **There are many books, journal articles, and videos on the subject of diversity and the related theory**
- **Information and access should be readily available for all who seek it**

# OPPORTUNITIES

- **Mechanisms to become comfortable with what we are not comfortable through dialogue and discussion;**
- **Learn about issues about which we are unfamiliar through readings, videos, and lectures;**
- **Recognition that we did not create the problems but inherited them;**
- **Attend more extensive seminars on diversity such as Opening Doors.**

# Final Thought

- A reminder for those of us who serve others:

*“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come here because your liberation is bound up with mine, then stay and we can work together.”*

Lila Watson  
Aboriginal Educator Activist