

# Ohio Public Safety

## Fact Sheet



## Diversity in the Workplace

What would a world be like without diversity? It would be a dull world. Our differences are strengths, not weaknesses. Diversity refers to differences we recognize in others and ourselves. Some of these include gender type, culture, race, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation and physical and mental abilities. It also includes workplace relationships such as management/non-management, headquarters/field office, techies/non-techies and employees with families/single employees.

Changes constantly effect the make-up of a workforce. Some changes over the past several years include having more women in the workforce, working with people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and utilizing the skills and talents of an aging workforce.

Because of these demographics and the fact that the U.S. population is changing into a “salad bowl” from a “melting pot,” people nowadays must know more than merely the facts about and languages of other people and cultures. We also need the skills to work in and adapt to a changing world and workforce. People who are truly educated understand there is no single perspective, interpretation, standpoint or reality. They realize that there are many bodies of knowledge and ways of knowing about the world.

Think of it this way. Some people like their eggs scrambled, some like them sunny-side up and some like them poached. Think about it. It doesn't mean that people who like scrambled eggs are “bad” and people who like them the other ways are “good.” People are not robots like R2D2. We each have unique and special qualities.

Diversity is *not* about becoming like one another. It *is* about recognizing and valuing differences and respecting those differences. Belief systems are those deeply rooted ways of thinking and behaving that help us make sense of the world. But many of our beliefs may be based on incorrect or incomplete data.

Contributions are worthwhile from everyone. Each of us is unique with a variety of cultural and biological distinctions. We all need to learn how to appreciate each other's differences in all their wealth.

### **Communication Pointers**

Skills such as openness, listening, respectful, language and communication are important in a diverse setting. Here

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are a few communication tips:

- Be sensitive to others. If you offend someone, apologize immediately if you know about it. Sometimes people offend others and don't even know about it.
- Listen more—people like people to listen to them and appreciate those who do.
- Avoid generalized language. Try to be sensitive to how what you say may be interpreted.
- Humor—sometimes people are so relaxed that they forget to consider how their off-the-wall comments or jokes hurt others.
- Gestures in one culture may mean a different thing in another culture. For example, Desmond Morris in *Manwatching* points out if you give the “okay sign” with your thumb and index finger, it means “A-OK” in the USA and much of Europe, but it means “please give me change (coins)” in Japan.



Diversity makes the world a special place. By valuing each human life and each of our differences, we make the world stronger and a better place in which to live and work.

(Parts adapted from *Diversity Food for Thought*)