

Pushing Past Stereotypes: Deconstructing Islamophobia and Best Practice for Muslim Patients

Program Description

The purpose of this program is to introduce participants to the dynamics of the Muslim community in the United States, with a focus on deconstructing stereotypes and biases against them. More than simply describing Islamophobia, participants will develop a deeper understanding of how bias manifests in both clinical and educational environments and affects professional environments. Each workshop will be carefully catered to the professional angle of participants (e.g. clinicians, medical professionals, educators, etc.) to explore both policy, current research, and case studies that illuminate how these biases manifest and hinder the working relationship between client/clinician, student/educator, or patient/physician. The workshop will include lecture components, as well as small and large group discussions to facilitate deeper engagement of course material.

Each workshop will begin with an overview of Muslim demographics in the United States and an introduction to basic Islamic tenets of faith and practice. Following, participants will learn about the history of Muslims within America and the myriad events and policies that gave rise to contemporary Islamophobia which started far before the events of 9/11. Before moving to clinical research and best practice suggestions, participants will also engage current policies that discriminate against Muslim populations (e.g. travel ban) to understand and connect political bias to personal oppression. Lastly, current relevant research and suggestions for best practice will be covered in an engaging and interactive manner such that participants leave better prepared to confront Islamophobic bias and actively dismantle it personally and professionally.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this workshop, participants should be able to:

1. Explain how bias against Muslims is a manifestation of historical events and policies that affect current approaches to this population, including political and social discrimination and hindrances in professional environments;
2. Describe basic components and beliefs of Muslims, demographics of Muslims within America specifically, and how Islamophobia arises in both overly political and subtly personal (microaggression) manner;
3. Examine historical and contemporary policies that negatively impacted Muslim communities and personal bias that (often unintentionally and unknowingly) cause disruption in social cohesiveness, professional and educational environments, and distract from the therapeutic encounter between client and clinician;
4. Demonstrate best practices for engaging Muslim clients/students/patients and leadership within their respective organizations for dismantling Islamophobia that may be present in the working environment;
5. Outline historical impressions on current sociopolitical cultures, how political becomes personal, and where such bias arises in professional spheres.

6. Name the tangible ways in which social, political, and professional bias can be deconstructed and moved past;
7. List current policies that impact Muslims, Muslim outreach organizations and community supports, best practices for engaging Muslim clients;
8. Outline beliefs and practices common to Muslims, how Islamophobia presents (bad policy and microaggressions).
9. Distinguish differences amongst Muslim populations (globally and within America), common beliefs versus distorted images of terrorists/zealots propagated in media and politics, appropriate areas of focus with Muslims clients versus bias projected onto Muslims clients.
10. Identify personal bias, poor practices in respective professional environments, discrimination not just towards clients but also colleagues, ways in which professionals can engage Muslims in their work.
11. Implement best practices in personal approaches with Muslim clients, anti-Islamophobic practices and policies in working environments.
12. Design tangible programs and practices within working environments. Methods for making Muslim clients/students/patients comfortable by creating an inclusive environment.
13. Analyze current policies (both macro and micro within professions), personal (unintended) bias, past engagement with clients and how to adapt clinical skills to this population.
14. Discuss uncomfortable assumptions of Muslims and personal misconceptions in manner that is productive, patient, and humble.
(avoid the use of “know” and “understand”)

Target Audience

Working professionals within “helping” fields such as clinical social workers, medical professionals, mental health professionals, and educators.

Contact Hours

4.0 credit hours

Program Agenda

9 AM to 10:30 AM - Introduction, ice breakers, agenda for day, introduction to tenets of Islamic belief and practice. Historical overview of Muslims in America and biased policies that carry into today.

10:30 AM to 10:45 PM – Break

10:45 AM to 12:15 PM – Connecting policy to clinical practices, recognizing how bias manifests in unintended manners such as microaggressions. Cover current research on best practices in respect to Muslim clients, as well as analyzing policies within/outside professional agencies that impact the ability to deliver best practices.

12:15 PM to 12:30 PM – Break

12:30 PM to 1:30 PM- Interactive discussion of sample case studies that build upon skills presented in first half of the day-will be done in small group and then a large group discussion. Conclude with tangible ways to take knowledge from the day to other colleagues and actualize being an ally for Muslims within and outside of professional working environments.

1:30 PM - Adjourn

Faculty

Anderson Al Wazni (MSW, PhD student) received her bachelor's degrees in Religious Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies at N.C. State University. During this period, Anderson studied abroad in South and Southeast Asia and was inspired by innovative humanitarian work by local organizations and international NGO's in the area of women's health, environmental justice, and anti-poverty work. She received her Master's in Social Work from Smith College in 2014 where she completed a thesis on Muslim women and feminist identity which was subsequently published in the *NASW Social Work* journal. Following graduation, Anderson has published, given public talks, and run CEU seminars in the area of Islamophobia, trauma, and women's identities. She also teaches an introductory course on social welfare policy in the Smith College MSW program. Currently, Anderson is a PhD student in Social Work at UNC Chapel Hill focusing on climate change and its impact on exacerbating conflict and displacement.