

AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS

a violence prevention program

WHAT IS AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS?

Authentic Connections is a community-based violence prevention program that utilizes six key principles rooted in improving social connection to support individuals and organizations in reducing, addressing and de-escalating stressful situations in public settings. It is designed for implementation in community, non-profit, public and for-profit organizations. The principles focus on Authentic Connections because research shows that increasing social connection and reducing social isolation decreases incidents of violence within communities.

The Wakanheza Principles were formed out of “The Wakanheza Project”- the founding program for Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health in the area of violence-based prevention programs of this type which was originally designed for young children and their families. However, these principles are universal for building authentic social connections. By using strategies more specific to different situations, environments and populations, organizations can create welcoming environments, increase social connection, and reduce stressful situations for their employees, clients and communities.


**RAMSEY
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THE WAKANHEZA PRINCIPLES



Environment: Environments have significant impacts on behaviors.



Bias: Everyone has implicit bias, which impacts their judgment.



Empathy: All people have the capacity to understand each other's ideas, feelings and experiences.



Culture: Culture includes deeply rooted beliefs and values that shape individual and world views that influence our interactions with others. Opening ourselves to the appreciation of all cultures and the opportunity to acknowledge differences and similarities will allow us to better connect with others.



Power: Power differences exist within systems and are also experienced uniquely by individuals and impact the way that people interact with others and their environment. Acts of violence can arise from feelings of powerlessness.



Connection: In any given moment we have an opportunity to make remarkable and profound connections with others when we are intentional and choose to do so.

HONORING OUR ROOTS

Wakanheza (wah-kahn-ee-za) is the Dakota word for child and translates literally to “sacred being.” Gabrielle Strong, a member of the Dakota Nation formally gifted the word Wakanheza to Ramsey County in 2004 to share the world view of children as sacred, remind us of the meaning of our words and include indigenous languages of Minnesota in our work. The Wakanheza Principles ask organizations to consider these six principles in their daily interactions.