

# Documentation Tips

## If You Do It, Write It Down!

One consistent issue that we see when we conduct our annual civil rights compliance reviews with the 8 (eight) counties for the year, is lack of thorough documentation. Our counties are doing good work to increase participation of underserved populations, however, they aren't always documenting it.

More than one county director or staff member has said something to the effect of, "That is something we just do, but we never write it down. It's just common sense!" Please...write it down.

Here is an example. In going through the portion of the County Civil Rights Checklist and Filing Guide during a review, a county director listed off of the top of her head at least three instances where their county office had made specific special accommodations for program participants. But the office did not document the situation, rather, thought that they were just doing their jobs by handling the request. Absolutely, it is part of our job to handle the request! But it is also our job to document our efforts to comply with the ADA and other requirements, no matter how simple the arrangements were to make. Being flexible and accommodating so that more people can participate is one of the key elements to the success of Extension programs.

Documentation does not need to be over-inflated or rigid. Simply jotting a note (including the date) when your staff troubleshoots issues, debriefs after an event or makes an arrangement that helps a person attend who otherwise would have found it too difficult to participate, is all that is needed. Then add the note to your Civil Rights file and be sure to include the example in your annual county civil rights planning.

Here are some other ideas that may help:

- Clip newspaper articles about extension programs for your files
- Make lists of news outlets in the county, including contact information.
- Copy phone and walk-in messages for correspondence files.
- Request copies of staff and faculty calendars for correspondence files.
- Request attendance sheets from agents after programs.
- Set aside a time each month to update and file civil rights materials.
- Make a shortcut on your desktop to file civil rights materials in your county's SharePoint site folder as they come in.
- Ensure that the "...and Justice for All" poster is displayed in clear view for visitors.

It is important to remind everyone CONTINUALLY that as employees of WSU, civil rights is EVERYONE'S responsibility.