Competencies for Respectful Communication

**AVOID ASSUMPTIONS**
When thinking about issues of diversity and interacting with colleagues, always check yourself by asking yourself questions: Am I missing any part of the picture? What do I think I know, and what do I actually know? Challenge those assumptions!

**AVOID SPOKESPERSON SYNDROME**
Use “I” language. Ensure that individuals speak from their own experience and not as the representative of an entire group. Be careful that you don’t become a spokesperson yourself...

**PLATINUM RULE**
Treat others the way they would want to be treated. And the only way to know how respect “looks” to someone is to ask.

**BE CURIOUS AND ASK RESPECTFULLY**
Put your natural curiosity to good use. Often our fear of inadvertently offending someone can become a barrier to asking the necessary questions. You might say something like, “If you have a few minutes today, I’d love to learn more about your thoughts on ________.” This kind of language communicates that you respect your colleagues and are open to understanding a new perspective.

**LISTEN ACTIVELY**
If you are mentally constructing what you are going to say next while a colleague is still speaking, that signifies that you have stopped listening actively.

**DEBUNK STEREOTYPES**
Stereotypes can be the worst culprit in creating conflicts and misunderstandings. If you hear key words such as “all,” “always,” “never,” “them,” and “those people.”

**ADDRESS BEHAVIOR, NOT BELIEF**
All individuals are free to believe whatever it is that they believe. However, it’s critical that all employees behave respectfully toward one another in the workplace.

**ENCOURAGE LEARNING**
Learn from every encounter, and use those insights to continue building your knowledge base.

**ACKNOWLEDGE AND APOLOGIZE FOR MISTAKES**
We have to acknowledge that given the breadth and depth of diversity, we’re all going to make mistakes. But mistakes are important to make – you can learn from them and they provide an opportunity to deepen our understanding of one another – so long as they are dealt with properly. They must first be acknowledged and then you must then take ownership and genuinely apologize for the mistake made.