



Center for African American Recovery Development

RCO Toolkit

Resource 4.2

Cultural Grounding Training Guide



4.2 Cultural Grounding Training Guide

Purpose

This guide introduces foundational practices to help staff, volunteers, and partners serve Black recovery communities with awareness, respect, and cultural humility. It is designed as a starting point for training and reflection—not a substitute for lived experience leadership or advanced facilitation.

Why This Matters

Black communities have often been harmed when recovery spaces ignore culture:

- **Microaggressions & Stereotyping** – Black clients labeled as “angry” or “resistant.”
- **Lack of Representation** – Leaders and staff do not reflect the communities they serve.
- **Westernized Models** – Recovery stripped of spirituality, kinship, and cultural traditions.

Culturally grounded practice ensures recovery is **safe, affirming, and reflective of Black resilience**.

Core Training Topics

- **Racial Trauma & Recovery** – Understanding how systemic racism shapes addiction and recovery.
- **Afrocentric Healing Practices** – Integrating traditions from oral storytelling to communal rituals.
- **Decolonizing Language** – Replacing stigmatizing or clinical terms with affirming, culturally resonant words.
- **Intersectionality** – Addressing how race, gender, sexuality, faith, and ability shape recovery experiences.

Essential Peer & Staff Skills

- **Cultural Humility** – Approaching communities as learners, not experts.
 - **Bias Awareness** – Identifying and addressing stereotypes in real time.
 - **Inclusive Communication** – Using affirming, respectful language.
 - **Reflective Practice** – Building habits of self-checking privilege, assumptions, and blind spots.
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Practices & Activities

1. Language Swap (15 minutes)

- **Setup:** Provide a list of common stigmatizing or clinical terms (e.g., *addict, clean, noncompliant*).
- **Instructions:** In pairs, replace each with a culturally affirming alternative (*person in recovery, abstinent, seeking support*).
- **Debrief:** Ask: *How does language shape dignity? How do these swaps change the way recovery feels?*

2. Bias Reflection (10 minutes individual, 10 minutes group)

- **Setup:** Ask participants to silently list three stereotypes they've heard about Black recovery.
- **Instructions:** In small groups, share lists and discuss where these ideas come from (media, institutions, personal bias).
- **Debrief:** Ask: *What harm do these stereotypes cause? How can we interrupt them in practice?*

3. Community Anchors Map (20 minutes)

- **Setup:** Provide flipchart paper or worksheets.
- **Instructions:** Groups identify local spaces (barbershops, salons, churches, clubs) that could host recovery conversations.
- **Debrief:** Ask: *Where do people already gather and feel safe? How can we honor those spaces in program design?*

4. Microaggressions Role-Play (15 minutes)

- **Setup:** Share examples of microaggressions (e.g., “You’re so articulate,” “You don’t look like an addict”).
- **Instructions:** In pairs, one plays staff delivering the microaggression, the other practices responding as a peer with cultural grounding (naming harm, redirecting, affirming).
- **Debrief:** Ask: *What did it feel like? What responses opened trust, and which shut it down?*

5. Decolonizing Jargon (20 minutes)

- **Setup:** Provide sample intake forms or program flyers.
- **Instructions:** In groups, circle words that feel clinical, alienating, or stigmatizing. Rewrite them in plain, affirming, culturally resonant language.
- **Debrief:** Ask: *How does changing language change the message? Who becomes more welcome when we rewrite?*

6. Intersectionality Reflection Wheel (25 minutes)

- **Setup:** Draw a circle divided into wedges: *age, gender, sexuality, faith, ability, socioeconomic status*.
 - **Instructions:** Groups discuss: *How might each factor impact recovery for Black peers? Where might programs unintentionally exclude people?*
 - **Debrief:** Ask: *What’s one step you can take to build intersectionality into your own program design?*
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Quick Checklist

- ✓ Representation in leadership & staff
- ✓ Language that affirms Black identity
- ✓ Awareness of racial trauma in addiction care
- ✓ Training across gender, LGBTQ+, faith, and disability perspectives
- ✓ Recovery spaces that feel culturally safe

■ *Note: For advanced facilitation, certification programs, and organizational training, connect with CAARD for in-depth support.*