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# Press Release

## City employees attend mandatory anti-harassment training

*Training through EMPAC also addresses issues of discrimination, perception*

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (September 3, 2015) — Employees of the City of Arkansas City attended one of two mandatory training sessions Thursday on harassment in the workplace and valuing differences.

The one-hour anti-discrimination and anti-harassment seminars, which were held at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. in the Wright Room at Cowley College's Brown Center, were conducted by EMPAC employee assistance program (EAP) counselors Jo Lynn Bright, Blake Buhman and Dabria VanGieson.

Each session began with a definition of diversity and a discussion of valuing differences in people.

Bright led participants in an exercise to create a cultural self-portrait by having them look at the background of their given name and their ethnic or cultural group(s). Then she had them share those attributes with a partner at their table and asked the partners to relate how the people saw themselves.

Buhman discussed the different kinds of attitudes that divide people, such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and collusion. He also discussed how people form perceptions, including tendencies to magnify similarities and diminish differences when interacting with people of similar backgrounds or races, while doing the opposite with people of dissimilar backgrounds or races.

He pointed out that fastest-growing demographic among children today in the United States is biracial and multiethnic children, which he said will have profound implications for the workplace in the next 10 to 20 years as people with more complex ethnic and racial backgrounds enter the workforce.

Buhman closed by sharing several "diversity tips" for the workplace, such as being open about differences, not assuming anything, encouraging questions, and avoiding ethnic or sexual jokes.

VanGieson addressed harassment in the workplace by defining harassment as behavior intended to disturb, threaten or upset, and sexual harassment as persistent and unwelcome sexual advances.

**For immediate release**

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She addressed different types of harassment and harassing conduct, explained how different people react differently to physical touch, and offered guidelines for making workplace harassment complaints.

### **About EMPAC**

EMPAC is an employee assistance program dedicated to providing excellent services to employees and the members of their households, as well as the companies served. Its employer-sponsored services are designed for personal or family issues, including mental health, substance abuse, marital problems, parenting challenges, emotional issues, and financial and legal concerns.

EMPAC helps to equip and empower clients to work through and overcome challenges that might affect their wellness, happiness and productivity, enhancing life both in and out of the workplace.

Its mission is to provide an excellent, comprehensive and individualized resource for employees and the members of their households, as well as the member company, in achieving their full potential.

EMPAC strives to be the best employee assistance program in the Midwest, with continued growth in quality, service, programs and size. For more information, visit <http://empac-eap.com>.

### **About the presenters**

For nearly 10 years, Jo Lynn Bright has provided employee assistance services through training and therapeutic intervention work with EMPAC's team of counselors, serving more than 140 companies primarily based in the Kansas area. Her EAP experience specifically relates to creating a healthy work environment for private and public organizations.

Prior to joining EMPAC, Bright spent more than 20 years in the family services and child welfare, working for the Kansas Department for Children and Families and Youthville, Inc. While at Youthville, she served in a variety of roles — therapist, supervisor, and director of training and staff development.

Bright holds a master of science degree in marriage and family therapy from Friends University in Wichita. She is a licensed clinical marriage and family therapist. In 2013, she completed a certification in Christian sex therapy from Richmond Graduate University in Atlanta, Ga. Her bachelor of science degree is from Kansas State University in family life and human development.

Throughout her career, Bright has been intentional about encouraging and providing opportunities for individuals to engage in desired change efforts and personal or professional growth.

Blake Buhrman is an EAP counselor at EMPAC, where he handles marriage and family issues, among others. He graduated from Friends University with a master's in marriage and family therapy.

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He enjoys his work at EMPAC because he gets to encounter a wide variety of individuals, couples and families, and he loves to facilitate group training. He enjoys the opportunity to meet new people and assist them in reaching their goals. For him, coming to work every day is a gift, because he gets to watch courageous people address life challenges, and he can meet them right where they are.

Dabria VanGieson is a licensed marriage and family therapist. She received her master's degree at Friends University in 2012. Dabria also is certified in play therapy through the KC Play Therapy Institute, and enjoys using those skills with children and families. She often uses an experiential approach to therapy and incorporates hands on activities to help clients to process their struggles fully.

VanGieson is client focused and believes that all people can achieve healthy, successful lives. Her goal is to help to navigate the often bumpy path that leads to better days. She enjoys helping clients to overcome a variety of issues, but especially grief, anxiety and blended family issues.

Her goal is to come to work every day and help people to find peace, health, or just to live a better, well-rounded life overall, and to show clients that their pasts don't define our future.