



### Cultural Competency

Cultural competence training for health care professionals can improve the providers knowledge, understanding, and skills for treating patients from culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse backgrounds. Valuing diversity means embracing the uniqueness of all individuals along several dimension such as race, religious beliefs, ethnicity, age, gender, physical abilities, political beliefs, and socio-economic status.

Cultural competence encompasses behaviors, knowledge, attitudes, and policies that facilitate effective work in cross-cultural situations, ensuring equitable and respectful healthcare for all.

*“Cultural competence involves understanding and appropriately responding to the unique combination of cultural variables—including ability, age, beliefs, ethnicity, experience, gender, gender identity, linguistic background, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status—that the professional and client/patient/student bring to interactions. “Developing cultural competence is a dynamic and complex process requiring ongoing self-assessment and continuous expansion of one’s cultural knowledge. It evolves over time, beginning with an understanding of one’s own culture, continuing through interactions with individuals from various cultures, and extending through one’s own expansion of knowledge.”—ASHA*

#### **Practice Portal on Cultural Competence**

Cultural competence requires healthcare professionals to continuously work to improve their understanding of both their own beliefs and those of the patients they serve.

### Why is Cultural Competency so important in healthcare?

- Reduces health disparities and promotes health equity
- Improves patient safety
- Improves patient outcomes
- Improves patient satisfaction
- Increases quality of healthcare services
- Builds trust with patients and communities

## Tips for culturally informed communication?

- **Think beyond race and ethnicity.** Opportunities to expand our cultural understanding exist everywhere, especially when we consider culture beyond its association with ethnicity. Culture is central to our identity and, as such, may be seen or unseen by others. Culture is shaped by personal experiences that may include: ethnic and racial identity; religion; age; educational level; body size; heritage and family tradition; physical and cognitive abilities; sexual orientation; gender identity; and geographic and socioeconomic experiences.
- **Experience culture.** Consider experiential ways that you can learn about other cultures and endeavor to participate in activities that may not be familiar to you. When possible, take part in social, community and educational activities like viewing films, reading books, and attending faith-based services, festivals, parades, concerts, sporting events, art exhibits, workshops and lectures.
- **Use language that evokes images of people actively engaged in life when working with people with disabilities.** Avoid phrases that suggest helplessness or tragedy. For example, say “Bob uses a wheelchair” instead of “Bob is in a wheelchair.”
- **Think outside your own box.** Our values, beliefs, biases, and life experiences shape our perspectives. It's crucial to consciously assess how these factors influence our understanding of other cultures and to refrain from making assumptions based on our personal experiences. Cultivating cultural awareness begins with acknowledging the limitations of our own cultural knowledge.
- **Listen carefully.** Hearing doesn't always equate to listening. Our perceptions, biases, and expectations can hinder genuine listening and understanding of both obvious and subtle messages. Being mindful involves focusing on and identifying the conveyed information, allowing us to truly comprehend what's being communicated.
- **Learn by asking.** People feel respected when others are genuinely interested in learning about their views and perspectives. Consider incorporating questions into conversations that demonstrate your desire to learn more about others' cultural experiences. Use open-ended questions that encourage dialogue, such as: “What do you think?” “How can I be of assistance to you?” “What information is important for me to know about you and your culture?” “How would someone from your community likely react in this situation?”
- **Avoid insensitive comments.** Addressing insensitive or hurtful comments in group settings is important. . Do not reinforce this behavior. If you are comfortable doing so, make known your discomfort with what has been said and ask that no more insensitive comments be made.
- **Tune in to non-verbal behaviors.** Sometimes, behaviors can provide more details about how someone is reacting to a situation than what they may be comfortable saying. It is important to recognize welcoming behaviors as well as those that may be defensive so that you can adjust your approach accordingly. Similarly, be aware of your own body language. Does standing while others are sitting demonstrate authority, or aggressiveness?
- **Respect language preferences.** Before approaching a new group of people, consider whether the materials you have to offer or your presentation need to be adapted to ensure that you are understood. In some cases, it might be necessary to translate materials or invite an interpreter to the presentation. Other times, such as when communicating with young children, simply adjusting your vocabulary might suffice.
- **Expand your comfort zone.** Encountering individuals or cultural groups without prior experience can be a challenge. Acknowledging this and striving to learn more about them is crucial to build confidence and enhance outreach. Asking questions demonstrates your genuine interest in learning and ensures that information is delivered in a useful manner..
- **Honor flexibility in people's self-identification.** We may make assumptions about people's cultural identity while they may have an entirely different perception of themselves. Listen for information about self-perception. For example, do they consider themselves as having a spouse or a life partner? People

may identify with a particular aspect of their diversity at different times (e.g., being a lesbian may be very salient in some circumstances but not in others)

- **Make local connections.** Working with respected community-based organizations and venues can significantly enhance message delivery to your audience. Social clubs, advocacy groups, religious institutions, civic groups, unions, colleges, and universities often hold the trust of the communities they serve. Collaborating with leaders from these organizations can facilitate more effective communication and outreach. Partnering with these respected entities not only helps deliver messages in relevant forums but also ensures that your information is conveyed in a manner that resonates and connects with the audience's values and beliefs.

Sourced from <http://champsonline.org/tools-products/cross-disciplinary-resources/cultural-competency-resources>

<https://www.pta.org/docs/default-source/uploadedfiles/guide-to-cultural-awareness-iii>