Are You Culturally Competent?

Phuong H. Hoang
Instructor

OBJECTIVES

- Increase awareness of your own cultural competency, and determine areas of strengths and needs.
- Evaluate program practices and modify current practices, as needed.
- Structure opportunities to promote cultural competence in programs, including bridging relationships with families and the community.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

AWARENESS
- Own attitude, beliefs, and behavior
- Attitude, beliefs, and behavior towards others

KNOWLEDGE
- Understanding others’ customs, attitudes, and beliefs
- Knowing appropriate terminology and facts

SKILLS
- Communication and other skills which promote effective interaction with people across cultures

* Cultural competence is a developmental process that is continually evolving.*
Are You Culturally Competent?

ATTITUDES

- Assessing your own culture affects how you view other cultures.
- Wide range of preferences in many aspects of culture:
  - Sense of self and space
  - Communication and language
  - Dress and appearance
  - Food and eating habits
  - Time and time consciousness
  - Relationships, family, friends
  - Values and norms
  - Learning styles
  - Work habits and practices

KNOWLEDGE

Practical ways to gain cultural knowledge:
- Learning as much as possible about others’ perspectives (rely less on generalizations)
- Ask those you serve about the accuracy of your information
- Share your information with others, participate in training sessions, get information from reliable sources

Examples:
- Mexico has over 60 indigenous languages (do not assume all Mexicans speak Spanish)
- Realizing that different cultures have different meanings for body language or gestures

SKILLS

- Possess personal qualities that reflect genuineness, empathy, warmth, and a capacity to respond flexibly to a range of possible situations.
- Ability to discuss cultural differences and issues openly, and to respond to culturally-based cues.
- Assess the meaning culture has for individual cultures.
- Ability to work effectively with an interpreter to obtain information from a client.
- Ability to evaluate new techniques, research, and knowledge regarding their application in working with culturally diverse population.
Both individuals and organizations are at various levels of awareness, knowledge, and skills along the cultural competency continuum.

PERSONAL BELIEFS

- Treat clients with respect for their culture.
- Believe that it is acceptable to use a language other than English in the U.S.
- Intervene when others use insensitive comments or behaviors.
- Understand how culture can affect child-rearing practices such as discipline, dressing, toileting, feeding, communication, and expectations for the future.
- Understand the impact of culture on life activities such as education, gender roles, perception of time, employment, views of wellness, views of disability, and the value of Western medical treatment.

SERVICE

- Learn about acceptable behaviors and customs that are prevalent in the population.
- Seek assistance from trained interpreters or those who can help interpret, as needed.
- Consider clients’ and families’ norms and preferences when planning appointments, outings, celebrations, meals, or homework/recommendations for caregivers.
- Allow for alternative methods of sharing experiences and communication, such as story telling and use of props to support the “oral tradition” prevalent in some cultures.
- When communicating with those with limited English proficiency, use key words/signs in their language, visual aids, gestures or prompts, and trained interpreters.
Are You Culturally Competent?

ORGANIZATION

- Mission statement which states that ALL persons shall receive appropriate services.
- Policy for handling staff member’s inappropriate language or behavior related to race, ethnicity, gender, ability, or sexual orientation.
- Actively recruits employees who are bilingual, from culturally diverse populations, or have experience working with populations reflecting diverse backgrounds.
- Agency provides feedback based on job performance, not based on the use of Mainstream American English.
- Agency accommodates space or time off for religious observances that are not part of the work calendar.

IDENTIFYING BARRIERS

- Cost of implementation
- Sheer size of the organization
- Fear of hiring underskilled, uneducated employees
- Strong belief in a system that favors merit
- Annoyance at reverse discrimination
- Perception that there has been a lot of progress
- Diversity is not seen as a top-priority issue
- The need to dismantle existing systems to accommodate diversity

ASSESSMENTS AND CHECKLISTS

- No all-inclusive checklist
- Continuum, not end-product
- Assess and evaluate
  - Characteristics of organization
  - Quality of services
  - Organizational policies and procedures
- Sample Assessment:
  National Center for Cultural Competence – Promoting Cultural and Linguistic Competency in Early Intervention and Early Childhood Setting
**CROSS-CULTURAL TEAM BUILDING**

**Factors** such as:
- Valuing CHANGE versus TRADITION
- SPECIFIC versus VAGUENESS IN COMMUNICATING
- ANALYTICAL versus INTUITIVE PROBLEM SOLVING
- Emphasis on INDIVIDUAL versus GROUP PERFORMANCE
- TASK/PRODUCT versus RELATIONSHIP/PROCESS
- COMPETITION versus COLLABORATION
- RIGID versus FLEXIBLE ADHERENCE TO TIME

---

**DIVERSE TEAM HIGH PERFORMANCE**

- Acknowledge differences
- Find common ground
- Identify individual interests, strengths, and preferences
- Clarify expectations
- Collectively shape group culture
- Create a feedback loop
- Openness and flexibility is modeled
- Understanding that culture change is slow, but can add up to bigger change

---

**INCLUSIVITY**

- Employees are welcome and accepted regardless of life-style variations
- All segments of your population are represented in upper management
- Air time at meetings not dominated by any one group
- Cliquishness between groups is absent
- Variety in dress is the norm
- Warm, collegial relationships exist between people of diverse backgrounds
- Food and refreshments at functions/food facilities take into account religious and personal preferences
- Flexibility to accommodate personal responsibilities outside the job
Are You Culturally Competent?

**Tips for RESOLVING CONFLICT**

- Use indirect approach
- Emphasize harmony
- Clarify cultural influences
- Work with informal leaders
- Get specific
- Keep options open
- Get honest with yourself
- Find out how conflicts are resolved in other’s cultures
- Capitalize on the relationship
- Respect, respect, respect!

---

**Thank you!**

TRAIN Educational and Community Services  
7718 Belair Road  
Suite 202  
Baltimore, MD 21236  
(443) 725 – 4853  

Email: phuong@traineducational.com