

Introduction to Cultural Competence

A Training Tool



Overview

Overview

- What is culture, and why is it important?
- What is cultural competence, and why is it important?
- How can we achieve and assess cultural competence?

What Is Culture?

What is Culture?

An integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, roles, relationships, and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations

Source: National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University

Culture Matters

When culture is ignored, families are at risk of not getting the support they need, or worse yet, receiving assistance that is more harmful than helpful.

Culture Gives Context and Meaning

- It is a filter through which people process their experiences and events of their lives.
- It influences people's values, actions, and expectations of themselves.
- It impacts people's perceptions and expectations of others.

Culture Is Inherent in Family Support Practice

- It informs our understanding of when support is needed.
- It influences how and from whom we seek support.
- It influences how we attempt to provide support.

What Is Cultural Competence?

Cultural competence:

1. The integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services, **thereby producing better outcomes**

Cultural competence:

2. The ability to think, feel, and act in ways that acknowledge, respect, and build upon ethnic, socio-cultural, and linguistic diversity

Cultural Competence vs. Cultural Awareness

- Cultural competence:
The ability to effectively operate within different cultural contexts
- Cultural awareness:
Sensitivity and understanding toward members of other ethnic groups

Source: National Association of School Psychologists

How Do We Acquire Cultural Competence?

- Recognize the broad dimensions of culture
- Respect families as the primary source for defining needs and priorities
- Increase sensitivity to alienating behaviors

cont.

How Do We Acquire Cultural Competence?

- Change decision-making processes to include families and the community
- Commit to structural and policy changes that support cultural diversity
- Make policies and practices fluid to accommodate necessary adjustments

Achieving Cultural Competence

Achieving Cultural Competence

Individually

- Do you have close personal relationships with people who are culturally and socio-economically different?
- Do you have the desire, knowledge, and skill to integrate culturally relevant considerations into your work?

cont.

Achieving Cultural Competence

Individually

- How do your own cultural experience and values impact the way you work?
- Do you continuously engage in an open and honest dialogue about culture and diversity with diverse groups of people?

Achieving Cultural Competence

Organizationally

- Value diversity
- Conduct cultural self-assessment
- Identify cross-cultural dynamics
- Institutionalize cultural knowledge
- Adapt service delivery to diversity within and between cultures

Value Diversity

- Create an environment in which people feel safe to express culturally based values, perceptions, and experiences
- Host social events at which music, food, & entertainment reflect cultures represented
- Hire staff and leaders who reflect the community's cultural diversity
- Partner with cultural organizations and

Conduct Self-Assessment

- Honestly explore values, beliefs, and attitudes about your culture and others'
- Non-defensively engage the entire organization, families, and the larger community in the self-assessment
- Investigate whether recruiting and hiring practices and policies ensure diverse staffing and representative

cont.

Conduct Self-Assessment

Examine:

- Participation and satisfaction rates of families served from various cultures
- Program practices, activities, and services
- Methods of communication
- Program environment and décor

cont.

Conduct Self-Assessment

- Be open to revising the organization's mission and objectives
- Evaluate whether current staff can lead the organization to cultural competence

Identify Cross-Cultural Dynamics

- Understand how historical and political differences between cultural groups impact relationships and opinions
- Build capacity to communicate with non-English-speaking families
- Develop written materials that are appropriate for the literacy levels of families served

cont.

Identify Cross-Cultural Dynamics

- Be responsive to non-traditional families (gay and lesbian parents, kinship families, single fathers, etc.)
- Understand how religion influences values and behavior

Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge

- Create and / or adopt principles of practice around cultural competence
- Develop a permanent advisory group that focuses on cultural competence
- Maintain a library of publications, meeting notes, and materials from trainings
- Create a budget line-item for cultural exchanges and competence training

Adapt Service Delivery

- Communicate with parents in the manner they prefer (orally, in native language, etc.)
- Provide staffing that is linguistically *and* ethnically representative
- Develop community-based teams to assist with program development and implementation

cont.

Adapt Service Delivery

- Make referrals to culturally competent providers
- Leverage cultural strengths (faith, respect for elders, broad sense of family, etc.)
- Tailor outreach methods to the cultures represented in the community

Getting Started

Getting Started

1. Identify cultural diversity within the community

cont.

Getting Started

2. Conduct a comprehensive assessment of yourself and your organization:
 - Is cultural diversity celebrated?
 - Do staff and the organization understand and respect the cultures represented?
 - Do programs address the unique needs and concerns of the cultures represented?
 - Is cultural competence reflected in policies, practices, and procedures?

cont.

Getting Started

3. Engage in dialogue with cultural communities with which you work:

- Convene informal gatherings with personnel to explore beliefs, values, and attitudes related to cultural competence
- Build and use a network of community experts who have knowledge of the groups served
- Network with parents and family organizations

cont.

Getting Started

4. Identify and understand the needs and behaviors of individuals and families
5. Identify best practices by learning from other organizations and individuals
6. Design and implement services that are based upon families' and the communities' culturally based choices

cont.

Getting Started

6. Institutionalize policies, practices, and structures
7. Reassess and make needed adjustments
8. Keep learning (see *Resources* handout)

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