



## Cultural Competence: Definition and Conceptual Framework

Cultural competence requires that organizations:

- have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.
- have the capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve.
- incorporate the above in all aspects of policy making, administration, practice, service delivery and involve systematically consumers, key stakeholders and communities.

Cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period. Both individuals and organizations are at various levels of awareness, knowledge and skills along the cultural competence continuum. (adapted from Cross et al., 1989)



## Culturally Competent Guiding Values & Principles

### Organizational

- Systems and organizations must sanction, and in some cases mandate the incorporation of cultural knowledge into policy making, infrastructure and practice.\*
- Cultural competence embraces the principles of equal access and non-discriminatory practices in service delivery.\*

### Practice & Service Design

- Cultural competence is achieved by identifying and understanding the needs and help-seeking behaviors of individuals and families.\*
- Culturally competent organizations design and implement services that are tailored or matched to the unique needs of individuals, children, families, organizations and communities served.\*
- Practice is driven in service delivery systems by client preferred choices, not by culturally blind or culturally free interventions.\*
- Culturally competent organizations have a service delivery model that recognizes mental health as an integral and inseparable aspect of primary health care.

### Community Engagement

- Cultural competence extends the concept of self-determination to the community.\*

- Cultural competence involves working in conjunction with natural, informal support and helping networks within culturally diverse communities (e.g. neighborhood, civic and advocacy associations; local/neighborhood merchants and alliance groups; ethnic, social, and religious organizations; and spiritual leaders and healers).\*
- Communities determine their own needs.\*\*
- Community members are full partners in decision making.\*\*
- Communities should economically benefit from collaboration.\*\*
- Community engagement should result in the reciprocal transfer of knowledge and skills among all collaborators and partners.\*\*

### Family & Consumers

- Family is defined differently by different cultures.\*\*\*
- Family as defined by each culture is usually the primary system of support and preferred intervention.\*\*\*
- Family/consumers are the ultimate decision makers for services and supports for their children and/or themselves.\*\*\*



### Linguistic Competence: Definition

Linguistic competence - the capacity of an organization and its personnel to communicate effectively, and convey information in a manner that is easily understood by diverse audiences including persons of limited English proficiency, those who have low literacy skills or are not literate, and individuals with disabilities. Linguistic competency requires organizational and provider capacity to respond effectively to the health literacy needs of populations served. The organization must have policy, structures, practices, procedures and dedicated resources to support this capacity.

Goode & Jones (modified 2004). National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University Center for Child & Human Development.

Click [here](#) for the full text definition of linguistic competence.



### Guiding Values and Principles for Language Access

- Services and supports are delivered in the preferred language and/or mode of delivery of the population served.
- Written materials are translated, adapted, and/or provided in alternative formats based on the needs and preferences of the populations served.
- Interpretation and translation services comply with all relevant Federal, state, and local mandates governing language access.
- Consumers are engaged in evaluation of language access and other communication services to ensure for quality and satisfaction.

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\* Adapted from Cross, T. et al, 1989

\*\* "Other Guiding Values and Principles for Community Engagement" and "Family & Consumers" are excerpts from the work of Taylor, T., & Brown, M., 1997, Georgetown University Child Development Center, (GUCDC) University Affiliated Program, and

\*\*\* "Promoting Cultural Diversity and Cultural Competency- Self Assessment Checklist for Personnel Providing Services and Supports to Children with Disabilities & Special Health Care Needs Goode, T., 2002, NCCC, GUCDC.

Click on [Resources and Tools](#) for checklists that reflect these values and principles in policy and practice.