Introduction to Cultural Competence: A Training Tool

Cultural Competence

In a multicultural society such as ours, the commitment to value, respect, understand, and appropriately respond to cultural differences is imperative to the success of efforts to work with and support children and families. Culture matters. In fact, 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.

The purpose of the CBCAP PowerPoint presentation on cultural competence is to provide a framework for stimulating discussion about: (a) what cultural competence is and why it is important, (b) how to evaluate individual and organizational cultural competence, and (c) how to begin to develop cultural competence and create means to ensure ongoing success.

Cultural Competence and Prevention

The nexus between cultural competence and the prevention of child abuse and neglect may not be readily apparent, but is quite strong. The success of prevention and family support efforts is directly dependent upon the ability to build trust and understand all parents’ strengths, challenges, perspectives, and goals.

At the individual level, cultural competence provides one with the ability to think, feel, and act in ways that acknowledge, respect, and build upon ethnic, socio-cultural, and linguistic diversity. At the organization and system level, cultural competence provides the skills and infrastructure necessary to integrate and transform knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes.

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CBCAP-funded programs routinely serve richly diverse populations. Effective CBCAP programs demonstrate cultural competence by, for example:

> Developing curricula for parenting classes that are grounded in the cultural values and familial expectations of the population(s) served
> Hiring staff who speak the language(s) spoken by the families who use services.
> Promoting non-threatening, non-judgmental opportunities to learn different approaches to child rearing, nurturing, disciplining, and learning.
> Helping parents understand what schools, health care providers, and service systems expect of them with respect to child rearing practices, while at the same time working with protective services and agencies to understand and respect diverse cultures.
> Ensuring that services have the capacity and cultural competence to serve families effectively.

**Training Tool Facilitator**

The CBCAP PowerPoint training tool on cultural competence is designed to be used by a facilitator who is familiar with the tool and, ideally, has at least a basic knowledge about the topic. Facilitators should be knowledgeable and experienced in leading a conversation on this topic and fully aware of their own culturally, ethnically, and socio-economically based values, biases, misconceptions, and assumptions. It is important that facilitators be open to perspectives and views that may vary significantly from their own. Open conversation can bring out many stereotypes, assumptions, and judgments. Therefore, facilitators should anticipate disagreements and emotional reactions to others’ language and opinions. It is important to create “ground rules” for the discussion that ensure a safe and respectful environment for honest discourse.

Facilitators are encouraged to obtain additional background information about cultural competence by talking to people who have successfully developed competence in working with a culture different from their own, have adopted culturally competent policies and practices in their work environments, and/or have studied the subject by, for example, reading the materials listed in the Cultural Competence Resources document that was developed as part of this toolkit. Facilitators need not be experts or previously trained in cultural competence.

**Use of the Introduction to Cultural Competence Toolkit**

> Project the PowerPoint presentation onto a wall or screen so that all participants can see it. If you do not have projection equipment, simply print a copy of the presentation for each participant. It is recommended that you print copies in black and white. Color copies are expensive and are not necessary for handouts.
> Print black and white copies of the presentation using the “notes pages” feature so that workshop participants have space to jot down information for future reference.
> Print a copy of the Cultural Competence Resources learning tool for each participant.
> It is always good to print more copies than you think you will need. Unexpected participants might be present and/or participants may want extra copies to provide to friends and colleagues.
> Use the presentation as a guide for instruction and discussion. Workshops should include considerable give and take between the facilitator and participants. Most likely, you will find that workshop participants have great interest in the subject matter and want to contribute to a lively discussion.
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?
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.

Source: National Technical Assistance Center for State Mental Health Planning (Davis, 1997)
Cultural competence:

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

Source: Lynch and Hanson, 1998
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

Source: Focal Regional Research Institute for Human Services, Portland State University
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

Source: Adapted from National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University
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 leadership
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
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?
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
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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Cultural Competence Resources

This list of resources is one of three components of the Introduction to Cultural Competence Toolkit. It describes resources that are helpful to anyone interested in learning about cultural competence in the context of serving children and families. The toolkit also includes a PowerPoint presentation and a facilitator’s guide to using the presentation to conduct workshops, seminars, and discussions about the importance of cultural competence and how to develop it. Facilitators are encouraged to review at least some of these resources before conducting such sessions and discussions.

On-Line Resources

Community Toolbox
http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/enhancecompetence/learningcommunity.jsp
Online exchange among those doing work related to cultural competence

Early Childhood Research Institute
http://clas.uiuc.edu/index.html
Culturally and linguistically competent early intervention / preschool practices

National Association of School Psychologists
www.nasponline.org/culturalcompetence/index.html
Cultural competence guidelines and background information for working with children and families

National Association of Social Workers
www.socialworkers.org/sections/credentials/cultural_comp.asp
NASW’s Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice

National Center for Cultural Competence
http://gucchd.georgetown.edu//nccc/framework.html
Tools to help health and mental health programs design, implement, and evaluate culturally and linguistically competent service delivery systems
University of California Medical School
http://medicine.ucsf.edu/resources/guidelines/culture.html
Cross-cultural clinical practice guidelines

Publications


Focal Point
Two issues focus on (1) cultural competence, strengths, and outcomes and (2) achieving cultural competence through organizational self-assessment

Describes principles of family support practice and how to implement them, including a chapter on cultural competence

How are We Doing? A Program Self-Assessment Toolkit for the Family Support Field
Program self-assessment tool based on family support principles, including tools for cultural competence self-assessment

Making Room at the Table: Fostering Family Involvement in the Planning and Governance of Formal Support Systems
Explores ways to involve families in the planning and governance of formal systems of services and support

Race, Culture and Religion
Fact sheet offering examples of how family support programs demonstrate cultural competence

Understanding Families: Approaches to Diversity, Disability, and Risk