

CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Respecting cultural differences

Goal:

To enhance the staff-to-client and family relationship from a cultural perspective.

Mission:

To share with all Trumbull County Health Department staff what cultural competency is, why it is important to our work and how to implement cultural competency into the services we provide.

What is cultural competency?

- Cultural competency is a process that evolves over time. Both organizations and individuals are at various levels of awareness, knowledge and skill on the cultural competence continuum.
- Cultural competency requires effectively providing services to people of all cultures, races, ethnic backgrounds and religions in a manner that respects the worth of the individual and preserves their dignity.
- It requires that organizations demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.

Cultural Competence:

1. makes more effective use of time with clients
2. helps with negotiating differences
3. increases client compliance
4. positively affects outcome
5. improves communication with clients
6. decreases stress
7. builds trust in a relationship
8. increases client and provider satisfaction
9. improves conflict resolution
10. meets increasingly stringent government regulations, community expectation and medical requirements

The Trumbull County Health Department is required to:

Offer and provide language assistance services, including bilingual staff and interpreter services, at no cost to each client/consumer with limited English proficiency at all points of contact, in a timely manner during all hours of operation.

Provide to clients, in their preferred language, both verbal offers and written notices informing them of their right to receive language assistance.

Assure the competence of language assistance provided to limited English proficient clients by interpreters and bilingual staff. Family and friends should not be used to provide interpreter services (except on request by the client).

Make available easily understood client-related materials and post signage in the languages of the commonly encountered groups represented in the service area.

Basic Differences

Everybody is different, and these differences take many forms which include, but are not limited to:

- **ETHNICITY AND CULTURE**- the sources of the customs, language and sense of identity that people with similar roots often share.
- **GEOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND**- the neighborhood, city, region or country that shapes an individual's life and values.
- **LIFE'S EXPERIENCES**- which include family backgrounds, values and traditions, as well as school, work, travel, recreation, and hobbies.
- **BELIEFS**- including one's religion, outlook and philosophy of life.
- **PHILOSOPHY**- which determines gender and physical abilities.

- **WORKING STYLES-** the importance of teamwork and conflict resolution, leadership qualities and communication styles.

How we respond to these differences will determine the success of our client provider relationships and the value we bring to our organization.

Six Ways to Recognize Cultural Differences

- **Communication**
Communication forms the basis of thought for all cultural groups. Our cultural background greatly influences the way we communicate with others.
- **Spatial Needs**
A person's comfort level is directly related to personal space. Understanding these differences can greatly minimize misunderstandings. For instance Latinos tend to stand closer together, while white Europeans seem to prefer more space.
- **Social Organizations-** These are groups with whom we interact and associate ourselves with, that directly affect our behavior. Their influence helps us become who and what we are.
- **Time Considerations-**
People are either *past, present or future oriented*.
Past-oriented individuals hold on to old values, traditions, and/or beliefs.
Present-oriented people may find it difficult to keep a schedule. They may be late, or miss appointments. They feel they can recover at a later time.
Future-oriented individuals use the present to achieve future goals. They believe what is done today affects their future.

Environmental Control-

Environmental control can be divided into two categories.

- *External focus:* Individuals believe that fate, luck, and/or chance play a great part in their controlling environment. Italians tend to have an external focus: "If I'm predestined to live a shorter life, my smoking won't shorten my life span."
- *Internal focus:* Individuals believe their behavior will affect their future environment. White Europeans tend to have an internal focus: "If I quit smoking now, I may have a chance to live a longer life."

Biological variations-

These variations distinguish the ways in which the genetic makeup of members from a certain culture makes them more susceptible to certain illnesses. For instance, many African Americans over the age of 40 are more susceptible to hypertension, Hispanics to diabetes, and American Indians to tuberculosis.

Regardless of cultural background, behavioral patterns are identifiable in all patients.

Efficacious: healthcare practices may be beneficial even though they may be different from Western practices. For example, using acupuncture to treat and reduce pain.

Neutral: healthcare practices may offer no physiological benefit to the patient, but rather an emotional and/or mental benefit. For instance, a woman from the rural south, when delivering a baby, may put a knife underneath the bed to cut the pain. The woman believes this will help, so psychologically, this belief does help the patient.

Dysfunctional: an obvious dysfunctional practice is eating the wrong food. Consuming over refined sugar and flour is definitely not healthy.

Keeping in mind both patterns and cultural beliefs can aid in determining the necessity of a client-provider negotiated treatment plan.

Importance of Rituals

Reduces fear and anxiety
Converts the unknown into the known
Brings belief
Channel emotions; guides behavior
Affirms the group
Provides safety valve
Prevents neurotic illness; limits excesses
Ways of expressing and relieving unpleasant emotions
Confirms sense of belonging
Affirms group cohesiveness
Protects from evil, danger, and uncertainty

CARING OR PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES

- *Think about different being OK!*
- *Read, observe listen-Why are they different?*
- *Simplify and repeat instructions, write them*
- *Check for understanding, "Now you try it.."*
- *Listen to client and family*
- *Ask what they believe will help*
- *Use ethnic foods, comfort measures when OK.*
- *Tolerate periods of silence*
- *Apologize when appropriate*
- *Work as a team, ask for help when necessary*
- *Ask: "How can I help?"*

Treating all people alike means that we have to treat them differently.