



SHIAWASSEE
Health & Wellness

Cultural Diversity

A Course by Shiawassee Health & Wellness



Why Do We Need to Understand Cultural Diversity?

It's the law!

- Better outcomes
- Responsive evidence based practices
- Better person centered planning
- Meeting mandates

Mental health code mandates “multicultural services” for specific racial or ethnic groups

Federal funder requirements

Accreditation body (CARF) requirements

Contracting with MDCH



What is Diversity?

Diversity is a term that refers to the differences that exist between people. Understanding diversity involves knowing that there are a variety of groups of people around us with various characteristics that may or may not be familiar to us.

It means that our co-workers and neighbors may be different from us in various ways.

Such differences include age, gender, race, language, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliations, physical abilities and challenges and many more personal characteristics.

Diversity History and Holidays

Training about diversity often has to do with understanding the differences among groups and how we might respect those differences. **Diversity training** may discuss holiday, their meanings and why people celebrate them. Often, there is a history that helps to put into context some of the experiences various groups have had and how those experiences may have shaped people's thinking.



Forms of Diversity

Some discussions about diversity address foods that people eat, the way they talk or the music and dance that are representative of their history and practices. For example, eating with your hands is a common practice for many cultures, while others prefer to use chopsticks.

Diversity may involve examination of race and politics. Politics and racism affect both diversity and a person's understanding of how culture affects our ability to serve various groups. Knowledge of politics and racial history provides some background that is important to consider when serving diverse populations.

Cultural competence is about more than socio-political considerations. It includes an understanding that people talk, eat and celebrate life in various ways (e.g., a traditional Hindu wedding begins with the wedding party clothed in bright colors parading in together while dancing to music).



What is Culture?

Culture has to do with what and how people learn from one another, such as:

- Beliefs
- Practices
- Behaviors
- Expectations of one another
- How people live their lives

We take our cultural cues from others in ways we often don't think about very much.

Where we grew up affects our cultural practices. If you grew up in the southeast part of the United States, you likely pronounce words and use terms to express yourself differently than if you grew up along the beaches of southern California.

If you grew up in the northwest part of this country, you may not dress for church on Sunday the same way a person who immigrated from another country may dress—if you attend at all.



Behavioral Expectations

An example of culture has to do with behavioral expectations. Let's think about the use of clothing in various parts of the world.

For example, a woman is walking down the street wearing only a bikini. What would an individual think of her if that individual was:

From the United States?

From a very liberal background?

From the Middle East?

From a very conservative background?



Cultural Diversity

Diversity is about recognizing all the following factors: age, gender, race, language, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliations, physical abilities and challenges and many other considerations.

Acceptable Behaviors

Some ways of thinking and behaving that may be “acceptable” in some cultural situations may well not be acceptable in others. The same behavior in one place may be offensive somewhere else.

For example:

Try yelling, “Kill the bum” at the umpire the next time you’re at a baseball game. You May not want to try doing the same thing when you are in church or a court room.

This example has much to do with being culturally competent. Most of us unconsciously tend to expect others to behave in ways that are familiar to us.

We often think of familiar behaviors as the way things should be. When they aren’t the way we expect them to be, we may make judgments about others that are inaccurate or that don’t serve us well in working with others.



How Does Diversity Help Me?

Here is one way of thinking about diversity and cultural competence. Diversity helps us to understand that there are differences among us.

Cultural competence helps us to understand what those differences may be, how those differences are likely to affect our understanding of others and how that involves our ability to serve people effectively.

Age There is no particular age at which one is certain to move from being a young worker free from older age discrimination, to an older worker who is subject to such discrimination. Federal law prohibits its discrimination against workers who are at least 40 years old, suggesting those 40 and older may be old enough to experience age discrimination.

Obesity There is no set weight or body-fat proportion at which point obesity is defined. However, researchers and even children agree that recognizing that someone is “fat” is fairly simple and easily agreed upon. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) defines “obese” as “an excessively high amount of body fat in relation to lean body mass. According to this definition, about 40 million American adults are obese.

Disability Some disabilities (like blindness) have clear and recognizable definitions. Others, such as early stages of arthritis, are more blurred. According to U.S. law, a disability is a real or perceived physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.



How Does Culture Effect Delivery of Human Services?

Diversity is about recognizing that various factors exist including age, gender, race, language and many other considerations.

Culture has to do with what and how people learn from one another, their beliefs, practices, behaviors, expectations of one another and how they live their lives. It affects how we think, what we believe and how we express ourselves.

Cultural competence is an individual quality, but it also is affected by the working environment in which the individual practices.

Determining a person's mental wellness or mental illness is highly dependent upon observation or reports of that individual's behavior and thinking. If we don't have an understanding of that person's normative behaviors and how that person's cultural context affects our ability to work with him or her, we will be highly limited in assessing accurately the person's condition and needs.

Various cultural factors, including the person's and our own, affect one's ability to:

- Establish a trusting working relationship
- Assess correctly the person's service needs
- Formulate service goals that are meaningful and useful to the person
- Create a service plan that is acceptable to the person



Imagine

You go to the Refugee Center. There are many Arabic people there. No one speaks English in the waiting room. You are trying to keep your feet flat on the ground so your shoe soles don't show. People look away from you. Uncomfortable? Imagine being the different one here, plus you're depressed, hearing voices (in your birth language). How can we make you comfortable? You may speak English but you feel different.

Cultural Competency is a dynamic ongoing process, not a goal or outcome.

Competency means:

- Learning as much as possible about the consumer's own socio-cultural perspective and minimizing reliance on generalizations
- Don't just use a check box method (people aren't check boxes)

We will increasingly be asked to report race and ethnicity data.



Stereotypes and Discrimination

Stereotypes and sex discrimination can be problematic and should be avoided:

- Men are more masculine
- Jewish people are rich
- Spanish people are lazy
- People with mental illness are dangerous
- Don't trust Arab people
- And...many others



Tips

Before visiting or providing services in the home setting, seek information on acceptable behaviors, courtesies, customs and expectations that are unique to people of specific cultures and ethnic groups

- Do you take your shoes off at the door?
- What do you do if offered food?
- Respect their culture
- Ask them questions

Understand that traditional approaches to disciplining children are influenced by culture.

Customs are different when people deal with tragedy or death. Some cultures:

- Cry
- Scream
- Fall on the ground
- Walk away in silence
- Don't want to be bothered

This can be unsettling for the worker, but all are appropriate.



Tips continued

Eye contact

- It may not be depression, it may be culture

Accept and respect customs and beliefs about food, its value, preparation and use that are different from culture to culture.

Accept that male/female roles in families may vary significantly among different cultures.

REMEMBER

It is not only important to be aware of cultural aspects of a consumer but also of their family.

This is particularly significant in mixed marriages.



Cultural Competency Person

Mental health centers have a cultural competency point person who is responsible for:

- Coordinating cultural competency efforts
- Identifying cultural competency training and program needs
- Maintaining access to cultural competency resources

What can I do to be more culturally competent?

- Be aware
- Listen to where people are coming from
- Zero tolerance for discrimination
- Everyone treated with respect
- You won't be able to remember information about all cultures but consider culture may be playing a role in a person's presentation
- Information is available through:
 - The agency point person
 - The internet
 - Refugee Center
 - Christo Rey and others



Congratulations!

You have finished reviewing the course content.

Remember, this course is **not** complete until you pass the course exam and complete the survey.

