

What is Cultural Competency?

Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations. '**Culture**' refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups. '**Competence**' implies having the capacity to function effectively as an individual and an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by consumers and their communities.

Cultural competence requires that organizations:

1. have a defined set of **values and principles**, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to **work effectively cross-culturally**.
2. have the capacity to
 - a. **value diversity**, relate in a way that is nonjudgmental, respectful & supportive
 - b. conduct self-assessments, **gain awareness of and address bias/ unconscious bias**,
 - c. manage the dynamics of difference and **offer reasonable accommodations**, including special communication needs in primary languages and literacy variance;
 - d. acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge and
 - e. adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities served.
3. incorporate the above in all aspects of policy making, administration, practice, service delivery, and involve systematically consumers, key stakeholders, and communities.
 - a. **Considers each person as an individual** and does not make assumptions based on perceived or actual membership in any group or class.

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.

Cultural competence is 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**.

Principles & practices of cultural competence include:

1. Define culture broadly
2. Value employee's, customer's and patient's cultural beliefs
3. Recognize complexity in language interpretation
4. Facilitate learning between providers and communities
5. Involve/ engage with the community
6. A team that is representative of and reflects the culture, language and the diversity of the community
7. Collaborate with other agencies
8. Professionalize staff hiring and training
9. Institutionalize cultural competence
10. Avoid assumptions based on perceived or actual membership in any group or class

What's the Difference? Cultural Competence, Awareness, and Sensitivity

Cultural competence emphasizes the idea of **effectively operating** in different cultural contexts and altering practices to reach different cultural groups. Cultural knowledge and sensitivity imply understanding of cultural similarities and differences but don't include action or structural change.

Overall, we strive to value diversity, ensure we have reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities, address negative bias, respect different cultures and have a team that is representative of the community in which we work. Avoid making assumptions and stay affirming, supportive and kind.

*National Prevention Information Network Via the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

*Resource and details [available with this link](#).

*US Dept of Health & Human Services [information](#).