

2011

# Cultural Competency Overview & Resources

## Leadership Development Module

Modules complimenting the New AIDS Director Orientation Guide



## Cultural Competency

### Core Competencies - Cultural Competency Skills

- Utilizes appropriate methods for interacting sensitively, effectively, and professionally with persons from diverse cultural, socioeconomic, educational, racial, ethnic and professional backgrounds, and persons of all ages and lifestyle preferences
- Identifies the role of cultural, social, and behavioral factors in determining the delivery of public health services
- Develops and adapts approaches to problems that take into account cultural differences

Link to the [Toolkit on Core Competencies](#)

### Overview

There have been many concepts and approaches articulated about the need to build cross-cultural communication skills. The concepts of cultural competence, relevance, awareness, proficiency, sensitivity and humility have been [applied and defined differently](#) by different experts, disciplines and fields.

However the collective wisdom from all of this is that people are part of various cultures that impact their knowledge and behavior, including that related to health, and more specifically HIV/AIDS. In its broadest sense, culture can apply to people based on their country of origin or tribal affiliation, their race/ethnicity, their sexual orientation, gender, class/caste, age or other defining category. With this broad view in mind, it is important to point out that culture can also be fluid and people may identify with more than one culture, as its defined here, at any one time.

As an AIDS director, one of your chief goals is to understand and be able to communicate about who is impacted by HIV/AIDS in your jurisdiction. If you are like most states, your epidemic disproportionately impacts racial/ethnic minority populations, even if these populations are relatively small within your state. In addition, the epidemic impacts people that speak other languages as their primary language, and there is likely a wide variation in ability to read and access written information about HIV/AIDS at

all, much less if it is written in the language of their country of origin.

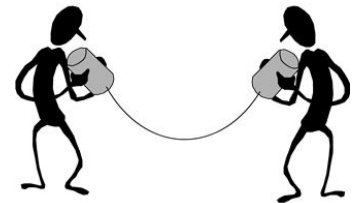


So, what is linguistic and cultural competence? Whether one can truly become competent in another culture may be open to debate because unless you are a member of a particular culture, you cannot truly function within that culture, which they believe is what competence implies. For that reason, concepts such as awareness (becoming aware of the history and aspects of another culture), relevance (making something meaningful according to the values and beliefs of the other culture), and sensitivity (being attuned to the issues, beliefs and aspects of another culture), have also been used.

Another aspect about cross-cultural communication is that it is an ongoing process. Thus, [many people prefer to think about cross-cultural communication as a continuum](#) where there is a “developmental process” over time to build this competence/awareness/sensitivity. Researchers [Tervalon and Garcia](#) have even proposed the concept of cultural “humility” to address a continual process of self-reflection and attention to power imbalances in the clinical relationship to clients.

A major reference point for health departments is the [National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care](#), or CLAS Standards, published by the Office of Minority Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2001.

These standards grew out of a desire for some standardized approach and definitions for cultural competency, and the final version was based on analysis of federal laws, regulations, contracts and standards, and input from the public and from an advisory committee.



### Resources

There are many resources and tools available to help build skills in cross-cultural communication:

- [National Center for Cultural Competence Resources](#)
- [National Center for Cultural Competence Curricula Enhancement Module](#)
- Office of Minority Health’s [Think Cultural Health](#) page
- Office of Minority Health [Center for Linguistic and Cultural Competency in Healthcare](#)
- HRSA [Centers of Excellence Cultural Competence](#) Resources
- [Cultural Competence in a Multicultural World](#), chapter on cultural competency from the University of Kansas (KU) Community Toolbox
- [8 Competencies Every Diversity Practitioner Needs to Succeed](#)

### Advice From the Field

- Be open to discussion
- Research and learn
- Lead internal efforts to develop staff capacity and understanding of different cultures and communities
- Don't assume learning is completed - approach cultural competency as a lifelong learning opportunity
- Model the behavior and communication you wish to see in your program



### Questions to consider....

- What has been your experience with building yours or your staff's cultural competency?
- Do you have programs to build this? How have these worked?
- Do you have specific policies and programs in place related to cultural competency?
- What resources have you accessed - in your state health department, outside the HD, nationally - to build cultural competency?

**NASTAD Resources:**  
[Health Equity](#)  
[Leadership Development](#)  
[Minority Leadership Program](#)  
Cultural Assessment Toolkit -  
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