



National Center for Cultural Competence

Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development
University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

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Getting Started...

Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Culturally and Linguistically Competent Service Delivery Systems for Children With Special Health Needs and their Families

Implications for Policy Makers and Administrators

This checklist was developed by the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC). It is one in a series designed to assist organizations and systems of care to develop policies, structures and practices that support cultural and linguistic competence. This checklist focuses on systems of care and organizations concerned with the delivery of services and supports to children with special health care needs and their families. It is also designed to assist the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services to achieve its vision “...to shape a future America in which: there is equal access for all to quality health care in a supportive, culturally competent environment, which is family-centered and community based; and health disparities by racial, ethnic and social status have been eliminated.”

Nationally, systems of care and organizations are attempting to respond effectively to the needs of individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse groups. There is no one method for getting started on the journey towards cultural and linguistic competency—at either the individual or system level. Organizations may embark on this journey at different points of departure with different estimated times of arrival for achieving specific goals and outcomes. Health care, mental health and human service organizations are at various stages along the cultural competence continuum. Similarly their personnel have different levels of awareness, knowledge and skills related to cultural and linguistic competence. Few organizations or systems of care have evolved to a degree of proficiency in which cultural and linguistic competency is infused at all levels—policy, administration, practice/service delivery and consumer. This checklist provides guidance for *getting started*.

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- **Create a structure.** Convene a work group within your organization with the sole purpose of addressing cultural and linguistic competency. This group should have representation from all levels of the organization. It should also reflect the diversity within the organization and community at large—including family and youth. This group can serve as the primary body to plan, implement and provide oversight to the organization’s cultural competence efforts.
- **Clarify values and philosophy.** Ensure that the organization has values, principles and/or mission that incorporate culture as an integral aspect of all of its endeavors. Use an inclusive process to re-visit and if necessary amend the organization’s values and mission. The inclusion of families, youth and community constituency groups can enrich this process.
- **Develop a logic model for cultural and linguistic competence.** There are numerous concepts and definitions for cultural and linguistic competence. Reach consensus on a definition or framework for cultural competence *and* linguistic competence within the context of your organization and the communities it serves. Engage key stakeholders in this process. The work group may assume leadership or facilitate this effort.
- **Keep abreast of community demographics.** Determine the racially, ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse populations served by your program, and those that live in the geographic area. Determine and address any disparity in access and utilization of services. Be cognizant of the sub-cultures and within group differences among these populations.
- **Assess consumer satisfaction.** Use multifaceted approaches to assess the degree to which youth and families are satisfied with services they receive. Include probes that elicit the extent to which consumers feel their belief systems and cultural practices are respected and integrated in the health care they receive. Telephone interviews, written surveys and focus groups are commonly used processes. Key informants or cultural brokers can provide guidance on approaches to best assess consumer satisfaction that are consistent with the cultural norms of youth, families and communities.
- **Create structures for family and youth involvement.** Consumers should be integrally involved in the design and implementation of services they receive. Establish governance boards, advisory committees, task forces and work groups to facilitate the meaningful involvement of families and youth in all aspects of your organization. Ensure an environment where trust, respect and shared power are highly valued *and* required.

DEFINITIONS

Cultural Competence

The NCCC embraces a conceptual framework and definition of cultural competence that requires organizations to:

- have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.
- have the capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) institutionalize cultural knowledge, and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve.
- incorporate the above in all aspects of policy development, administration, and practice/service delivery and involve consumers systematically. (Cross, T. et al. 1989)

Linguistic Competence

Linguistic competence is the capacity of an organization and its personnel to effectively communicate with persons of limited English proficiency, those with low literacy skills or who are not literate, and individuals with disabilities. The organization must have policy, structures, practices and procedures and dedicated resources to support this capacity. (Goode & Jones, 2002)

- Conduct a self-assessment.** Assessing attitudes, policies, structures and practices is a necessary, effective and systematic way to plan for and incorporate cultural and linguistic competence in organizations. Determine which instruments and consultants best match the needs and interests of your organization. Use self-assessment results to develop an organizational plan for achieving and/or enhancing cultural and linguistic competence. Self-assessment results may lead to changes in: organizational values, mission, policies and structures; budgets/allocation of fiscal resources; composition of advisory boards and committees; strategic planning processes; staffing patterns, position descriptions and personnel performance measures; approaches to practice, treatment and interventions; delivery of supportive services; quality assurance and evaluation methods; approaches to community engagement and information dissemination; professional development and inservice training activities; management information systems; telecommunication systems; and facility design and décor. Allocate resources to support this process.
- Determine staff development needs/interests.** Conduct periodic assessments of organizational personnel to determine what they perceive as their training or professional development needs and interests related to cultural and linguistic competence. The assessment should query personnel on the preferred methods, approaches and formats for increasing awareness and acquiring new skills and areas of knowledge. Ensure that resources are budgeted to support these efforts.
- Engage communities.** Develop partnerships that acknowledge strengths and build upon the resiliency and many networks of support within diverse communities. Communities have the inherent ability to recognize their own problems, including the health of their members, and intervene appropriately on their own behalf (Goode, 2002). Expand collaborative relationships to include natural helpers, community informants, cultural brokers, faith-based organizations, ethnic-specific and advocacy organizations and local merchants. Give careful consideration to delineating the values and principles that underpin community engagement.
- Adopt “lessons learned”.** Network within and dialog with other organizations or systems of care that focus on children with special health care needs and their families that have begun the journey of achieving cultural and linguistic competency. Consider the following: (1) reviewing their policies and practices, (2) adapting those that are consistent with your philosophy of care, and (3) negotiating opportunities for mentoring, training, consultation and technical assistance. Access resources from public and private sector centers and programs that have expertise in cultural and linguistic competence (e.g. integrated therapies, indigenous practices, in-home services, culturally defined approaches for health education and literacy, advocacy and community outreach/engagement and youth and family partnerships). Gather and categorize resource materials to expand your organization’s library/resource center.
- Create a refuge for sharing and learning.** Provide safe, non-judgmental forums for personnel to honestly explore cultural considerations—their own and those of the children, youth, families and communities they serve. Including youth, families and community partners can inform and enhance these experiences.

References

Cross, T., Bazron, B., Dennis, K., and Isaacs, M. (1989). *Towards a culturally competent system of care volume I*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center.

Goode, T. (2001). *Policy Brief 4: Engaging communities to realize the vision of one hundred percent access and zero health disparities: a culturally competent approach*. Washington, D.C. National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University Center for Child & Human Development.

Goode, T. & Jones, W. (2000, revised 2002). *Definition of Linguistic Competence*.

Maternal and Child Health Bureau (2002). *MCHB Draft 2003-2007 Strategic Plan*.

Resources

Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS)

Available: <http://www.immigration.gov> [April 4, 2003]

Cross Cultural Health

Available: <http://www.xculture.org> [April 4, 2003]

New York University School of Medicine Center for Immigrant Health

Available: <http://www.med.nyu.edu/cih> [April 4, 2003]

Office of Minority Health Resource Center—Closing the Health Gap

Available: <http://www.omhrc.gov> [April 4, 2003]

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About the



The mission of the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) is to increase the capacity of health care and mental health programs to design, implement and evaluate culturally and linguistically competent service delivery systems. The NCCC conducts an array of activities to fulfill its mission including: (1) training, technical assistance and consultation; (2) networking, linkages and information exchange; and (3) knowledge and product development and dissemination. Major emphasis is placed on policy development, assistance in conducting cultural competence organizational self-assessments, and strategic approaches to the systematic incorporation of culturally competent values, policy, structures and practices within organizations.

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