



The Cultural Proficiency Framework

Cultural Proficiency is the policies and practices in an organization or the values and behavior of an individual, that enable the person or institution to engage effectively with people and groups who are different from them. Cultural Proficiency is an inside-out approach that influences how people relate to their colleagues, clients, and community. Cultural proficiency is a lens for examining one’s work and one’s relationships. The four tools for cultural proficiency are the Elements, the Continuum, the Barriers, and the Principles.

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS -- Standards for Planning and Evaluating

- **Assess Culture:** Identify the cultural groups present in the system
- **Value Diversity:** Develop an appreciation for the differences among and between groups
- **Manage the Dynamics of Difference:** Learn to respond appropriately and effectively to the issues that arise in a diverse environment
- **Adapt to Diversity:** Change and adopt new policies and practices that support diversity, equity, and inclusion
- **Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge:** Drive the changes into systems of the organization

CULTURAL PROFICIENCY CONTINUUM

Change Mandated for Tolerance

Change Chosen for Transformation

DESTRUCTION	INTOLERANCE	BLINDNESS	PRECOMPETENCE	COMPETENCE	PROFICIENCY
<p><i>Eliminate Differences</i></p> <p>The elimination of other people’s cultures.</p>	<p><i>Demean Differences</i></p> <p>Belief in the superiority of one’s culture & behavior that disempowers another’s culture</p>	<p><i>Dismiss Differences</i></p> <p>Acting as if the cultural differences you see do not matter or not recognizing that there are differences among & between cultures</p>	<p><i>Respond Inadequately to the Dynamics of Difference</i></p> <p>Awareness of the limitations of one’s skill or an organization’s practices when interacting with other cultural groups</p>	<p><i>Engage with Differences Using the Essential Elements as Standards</i></p> <p>Using the five essential elements of cultural proficiency as the standard for individual behavior and organizational practices</p>	<p><i>Esteem and Learn from Differences as a Lifelong Practice</i></p> <p>Knowing how to learn about and from individual & organizational culture; interacting effectively in a variety of cultural environments</p>
BARRIERS			PRINCIPLES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focuses on “them” being the problem ● Tolerates, excludes, separates, demeans ● Diversity is a problem to be solved ● Prevent, mitigate, avoid cultural dissonance & conflict ● Stakeholders expect or help others assimilate ● Information added to existing policies & procedures 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focuses on “us” & “our” practices ● Esteems, respects, includes, celebrates ● Diversity, equity, and inclusion are goals to be attained ● Manage, leverage, facilitate conflict ● Stakeholders adapt to meet needs of others ● Existing policies, procedures, practices examined & adapted to changing environment 		
Reactive Behaviors, Shaped by the BARRIERS			Proactive Behaviors, Shaped by the PRINCIPLES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Unawareness of the need to adapt ◆ Resistance to change ◆ Systems of oppression & privilege ◆ A sense of entitlement ◆ Misuse & abuse of power & privilege 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The absence of cultural competence anywhere is a threat to competent services everywhere ◆ Culture is a predominant force ◆ People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture ◆ There is diversity within & between cultures ◆ Every group has unique culturally-defined needs ◆ People have personal identities & group identities ◆ Marginalized populations have to be at least bicultural ◆ Families are included as a system of support ◆ The diverse thought patterns of cultural groups influence how problems are defined & solved 		