



Community Integration Network

The Basics: Foundational Cultural Competence Workshop - Resources

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Background

This manual is based on a resource package developed to support a 3 hour training workshop on baseline cultural competence provided by the Community Integration Network (CIN) in the Fall of 2011 and the Spring of 2012.

Purpose of the Training

To enhance the capacity of service providers to respond to their diverse client base and colleagues with increased cultural competency.

Training Objectives

- To provide baseline training on cultural competence and the implications for employees in their work;
- To provide an opportunity for self-reflection and awareness about how personal privileges and potential biases may manifest in oppressive behaviours.

Ground Rules

Ground rules are the *specific guidelines* and *explicit assumptions* that govern how a group works together. By clearly identifying the kinds of interactions that will be encouraged and discouraged, groups can foster a more constructive, professional, anti-oppressive learning or working environment in which everyone will be respected:

- Generosity of Spirit
 - Start from a place of assuming goodwill
- Fair, respectful and equitable treatment towards all
 - Challenge respectfully
- Listen carefully to each other
 - Ask for clarification
 - Discreet use of communication devices
 - Silent alert
 - Conversations or prolonged email/texting outside training space
 - Maintain Confidentiality – outside room/process
- Balanced participation
- Take care of yourself
 - Share your frustrations with a facilitator
 - Take breaks as needed
- Classism, Racism, Ableism, Heterosexism, Ageism, Sexism or any other form of oppression will be named and processed by the group and/or individually. In addressing oppressive incidents the facilitators will **identify, act, educate** and **sanction**.
- All people will be **accountable** for their actions, gestures, mannerisms and their words. People who cannot follow these ground rules will be asked to leave the session

[1] Adapted in part from the work of Dr. Akua Benjamin and Adobe Consulting

Key Terms & Definitions

Having an understanding of the following key terms and definitions is critical when working from a cultural competence perspective. Please note that you will likely come across different variations of definitions and usage of these terms by different people in different contexts and regions as they are not standardized. They are appreciatively compiled from several sources with the acknowledgment that they will change over time as the thinking, attitudes, and discourse around related issues evolve. However it is important to understand that the definitions provided here speak to the usage of these terms in this manual.

Cultural Competence

There are a variety of approaches and interpretations of cultural competence. Some approaches focus on developing competencies about specific cultural groups, which while providing some helpful baseline information can compromise effective service delivery by reinforcing stereotypes because:

- culture is complex, dynamic, not static and therefore not always a reliable definer/indicator of peoples beliefs and needs;
- within a culture, even within families, each individual is an intersection/combination of multiple cultural identities so knowing one aspect only gives us part of their story;
- as a result it is impossible to know everything about every culture and individual even when we have done research and have experiences;
- the most reliable approach is not to make assumptions but to solicit from individuals the meaning and impact of culture on their beliefs and needs;
- and while culture is more than just about race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, dis/Ability, or sexual orientation, a strong anti-oppression analysis is required to acknowledge and address the pervasive differential impact of systemic barriers and treatment in society based on these identities.

It is important then to go beyond simply learning about different cultures. It is critical that there is also an awareness and interruption of the systemic barriers that exist for individuals and groups.

Applied systemically cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals to work effectively with diversity. Cultural competence acknowledges and incorporates, at all levels, the importance of the following principles:

- Increasing inclusiveness, accessibility and equity.
- Fostering human resources that is reflective of and responsive to a diversity of communities.
- Creating a climate where discrimination and oppressive attitudes and behaviours are not tolerated.
- Valuing cultural differences.

- Promoting human rights and the elimination of systemic biases and barriers.
- Practising self-awareness and self-reflection.
- Demonstrating personal responsibility and accountability.

Always keep in mind that 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. Explicit processes that facilitate and support common understanding, compliance and implementation are important to articulate and reinforce over time.

Anti-racism anti-oppression (ARAO)

A commitment to anti-racism anti-oppression (ARAO) practice is a key component of cultural competence. This requires vigilance to address barriers that have been systemically created through imbalanced power relationships between groups in society based on race, gender, sexual orientation, dis/Ability, class and other elements of diversity. It is important that individuals and organizations are mindful about reinforcing or maintaining these experiences of oppression in their policies and practices. For example, using arbitrary screening criteria such as levels of language skills, Canadian experience or overly zealous expectations about hearing, mobility or sight that are irrelevant or non-essential requirements for positions creates barriers for the dis/Abled.

Diversity

Diversity is a broad term that refers to the variety of differences among people. Often used within the context of culture, education, organizations or workplaces it is used to refer to differences among individuals and groups. Diversity is commonly understood in terms of dimensions that include, but are not limited to race, age, place of origin, religion, ancestry, skin colour, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, disability/ability, marital, parental or family status, same-sex partnership status, gender identity, creed, educational background, literacy level, geographic location, income level, cultural tradition and work experience.

Adapted from Inclusive Community Organizations: A Tool Kit (Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 2004). This definition focuses on what is meant by "diversity" and not on the models/frameworks to address diversity, such as Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression (ARAO); Cultural Competency; or Cultural Sensitivity.

Accessibility

The degree to which a product, e.g., device, service, environment, is accessible by as many people as possible. Accessibility can be viewed as the "ability to access" the functionality, and possible benefit, of some system or entity. Accessibility is often used to focus on people with disabilities and their right of access to entities, often through use of assistive technology, people whose first language differs from the dominant language to have interpretive services or translated materials and alternate arrangements for the faith practices of people whose differ from the dominant religion.

Equity vs. Equality

While achieving equality is a key goal of cultural competence, treating people the same based on the assumption that everyone is the same and has the same needs does not address historic systemic oppression that may have created barriers to access for members of marginalized communities. Equity recognizes that in order to achieve real equality it is important to take into account the different histories, experiences and needs of different groups which may mean sometimes treating people differently based on their different needs in order to ensure their equality of access, i.e. accommodation for the disabled. Equity is thus the process for truly achieving equality for everyone.

Inclusiveness/Inclusion

The principles of inclusion involve a clear recognition that society is not homogenous and the perception of diversity as enriching rather than a problem. It requires the recognition that ideas and practices solely based on or modeled after norms of dominant culture or society is what usually results in experiences of exclusion, discrimination and barriers to access in organizations for a number of people in society. Inclusion within an organizational context is comprised of a strategic process to eliminating barriers to access and implementing change, based on the acceptance that many people do not have access to services, jobs and positions of leadership due to societal and systemic factors rather than personal deficiencies. This process includes the active and meaningful involvement of people who are reflective of diverse groups and particularly newcomer immigrant communities to purposefully define and shape the culture within which people are being included.

Systemic Bias & Barriers

Institutional policies, procedures and practices that result in the systemic exclusion or promotion of particular groups of individuals. Systemic discrimination normally relates to an entrenched recurring practice rather than to an isolated act of discrimination, resulting in barriers to equality of opportunity for members of marginalized groups. Intent to discriminate may or may not be involved.

“Culture”

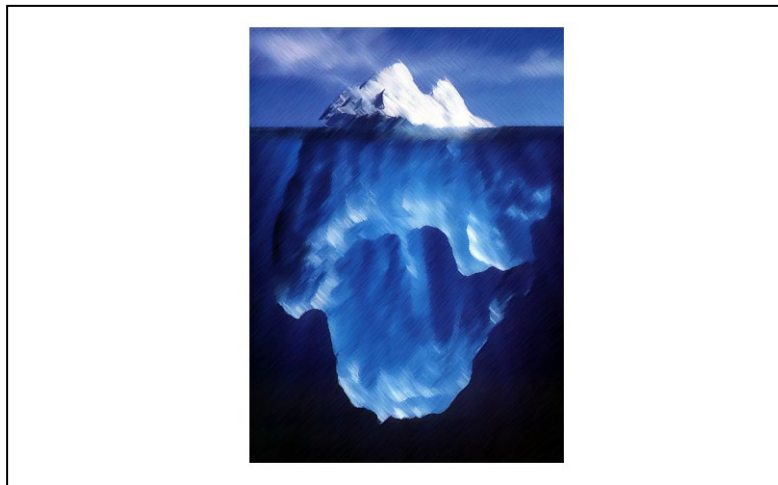
Culture is defined as the way a group of people do things together. It refers to the shared language, values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, or institutions of a group of people”. A group of people refers simply to more than one person. Any two people together have a culture.

Culture, in this context, refers not only to issues of ethno-racial and linguistic backgrounds but also to the range of other communities and cultures in which individuals may function either voluntarily or involuntarily (*Central East (Whitby) Mental Health Task Force.*)

Culture offers people (and groups and organizations) a design for life or “a system of informal rules about how people should behave most of the time.” (Cross et al)

Culture provides a “mind map” or a way of interpreting and shaping situations and environments.

Personal Cultural Iceberg



An iceberg is often used as a metaphor to highlight the complexity of culture. Just as an iceberg has a visible section above the waterline (about 10%) and a larger, invisible section below the water line (the other 90%), similarly culture has some aspects that are observable and others that can only be assumed unless explicitly shared.

The visible elements of an individual’s culture, the 10% above the waterline, will be what we observe in their physical appearance and their behaviours. Clothing, accents, body language, mannerisms, facial expression, tone of voice would be some explicit examples. However, even then we have to be careful about ascribing conclusive definitions to these elements until we clarify this with the individual.

For example we may hear a language spoken, which may be a second language and not their first language. They may also be wearing clothing that might erroneously indicate membership in a particular religion, from a specific part of the world or from a specific socio-economic class. Slurring of words, drowsiness or stumbling around may suggest intoxication when they may have recently taken medication that produces the same behaviours. They may also have a skin colour, complexion, hair texture or eye colour that leads to assumptions about their race or heritage that may be more complex than we observe.

Hidden elements of an individual's culture, the 90% below the waterline, will be things like values, politics, past experiences, religion/faith/spirituality, marital or relationship status that along with misleading physical appearance or behaviours we could not know unless articulated. Just take a minute to reflect on times when erroneous assumptions have been made about your culture and consider what was being observed about you that lead to the assumption.

It is a part of the human experience to make assumptions based on previous lived experience and knowledge as a way of assessing and protecting ourselves from potential harm. This is part of our survival instinct that is difficult to eradicate. However, in a society where there is systemic bias and discrimination against groups based on stereotypes and profiling, we have to be mindful that our assumptions may have differential impact on others and reinforce this discrimination. For example, when racialized people (people of colour) are asked "Where are you from?" with the assumption that they must be recent immigrants and couldn't possibly have origins or long histories in Canada. What is key is to acknowledge that we are making the assumptions, check them out before responding or acting on them and take responsibility when we have made a mistake or caused harm.

The "Iceberg effect", assigning arbitrary meaning to physical appearances and behaviours based on what we think we know because of previous experiences or learnings, is a key pitfall of simply learning about different cultures. While we may sometimes be right in our assumptions there is the danger that we may be wrong and in a service delivery context make critical errors in assessment and provision of care.

It is important then to clarify information about an individual's culture, its meaning to them and how it may impact their service delivery needs or the ways they would prefer to be interacted with.

Other important points to consider:

- We all have a personal cultural iceberg;
- Our personal culture is made up of all aspects of our identity;
- Our personal culture is the filter through which we experience ourselves, others, situations and the world;

- We may experience differential treatment based on certain aspects of our identity;
- A self-awareness of our personal culture is essential for effective interpersonal dynamics;
- We all have aspects of personal culture that may bump (conflict) with others;
- Every interaction with another human being is a cross cultural experience, even within our families;
- This is relevant to our interactions and relationships with others.
- While it is natural to make assumptions on first meeting someone, **the most reliable approach is to clarify our assumptions before acting on them and find out from individuals their beliefs and needs:**
 - Unchecked assumptions may cause discrimination.

Self Awareness & Self Reflection

Individual Cultural Competence

Self-reflection and self-awareness provide the basis for Cultural Competence. Self-reflection is the active and conscious process of inquiry into one's thoughts, feelings and actions, leading to increased self-awareness. This can happen through consideration of feedback from others, meditation, journal writing, dialogue and many creative endeavours. Self-awareness includes recognition of our personality, our strengths and weaknesses, our likes and dislikes and how our lived experience to date has influenced those things. It also includes an awareness of our power and privileges on the basis of cultural identities such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc... over others. It is also often a prerequisite for effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy for others.

Individual Cultural competence requires:

- Knowledge of self and knowledge of others;
- Life-long commitment to respecting individual rights, dignity, and difference;
- Effective communication skills that convey respect and sensitivity;
- Study and reflection on one's own heritage, worldview, identity, skills, and limitations.

Behaviors of the culturally competent individual include:

- Engaging in self-assessment and expression of individual heritage, identity, values, beliefs and biases;
- Studying concepts relevant to diversity, such as power, privilege, and prejudice;
- Forming relationships based on trust and caring even in the face of individual differences;
- Acquiring knowledge about and being willing to listen to other perspectives;
- Recognizing different and similar learning, communication, motivational, and decision-making strategies;
- Using inclusive language and appropriate questioning;
- Becoming involved with diverse individuals outside of work and classroom environments;
- Taking responsibility for one's own personal, professional, and educational development;
- Developing the ability and willingness to challenge prejudice and oppression.

Self Reflection Exercises

The following two tools are helpful personal cultural competence assessment exercises. While both are effective to complete individually, they can also be helpfully revealing if completed on your behalf by a trusted individual who can provide constructive objective feedback.

Both tools are helpful to complete repeatedly over time to keep assessing your strengths and challenges and identifying the areas of learning and competency development to build on.

Self-Awareness is an Essential Competency

based on model developed at Casey House Hospice



Self-Awareness:

Am I self-reflective? Do I learn from my mistakes?
What are my motivations?
Am I clear about my personal values and beliefs?
Am I aware of what I am feeling and thinking in situations?
Am I aware of my strengths and weaknesses?

Self-Esteem/Self Respect:

Am I able to experience myself as being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and of being worthy of happiness? (Nathaniel Branden's definition),
Am I able to take responsibility for my actions?
Do I take pride in my accomplishments? Am I self-motivated? Am I willing to take risks? Am I capable of handling criticism?

Self-Care:

Do I look after myself physically, spiritually, mentally & emotionally? Do I maintain my personal boundaries?
Am I able to say "No"?
Am I aware of the supports in my life (personal & professional)?

Respect for and Acceptance of Others:

Do my judgements of others affect how I listen to them?
Do I treat others with respect and honour their differences?

Conscious Communication:

Do I listen to others with curiosity and interest even when I do not agree with them?
Do I "ask" more or "tell" more when dealing with differences?
Do I take the time to express myself fully?
Do I express my feelings in a respectful way?
Am I aware how I communicate both verbally and non-verbally?

Cultural Competencies Reflection Worksheet

Rate your level of confidence with the following competencies, with 1 being the least level of confidence and 5 being the highest level of confidence.

Individual Competencies:	1	2	3	4	5
➤ Awareness of my own personal culture and how it affects my perceptions of others					
➤ Awareness of how my own personal relationship and history with authority, conflict and ways of doing things affect how I work in the organization.					
➤ Self-Reflection Skills					
➤ Conflict Resolution Skills					
➤ Ability and willingness to provide constructive feedback skills					
➤ Willingness to receive and engage with feedback provided to me					
➤ Willingness to shift my language to accommodate its impact on others					
➤ Ability and openness to work with different work styles					
➤ Ability and openness to communicate with different communication styles					
➤ Analysis of privilege and oppression					
➤ Awareness of how I live with my privilege and my oppression					
➤ Willingness to challenge behaviours, programs, policies and procedures that reinforce systemic oppression.					
➤ Willingness to advocate for programs, policies and procedures that challenge systemic oppression					
➤ An ability and willingness to maintain constructive working relationships with colleagues I have had conflict with, disagree with, have a hard time getting along with or may not even like.					
➤ An ability to engage with my colleague, manager/supervisor when I disagree with them.					
Leadership Competencies:					
➤ Model, communicate policy expectations and ensure compliance.					
➤ Vigilance in identifying and addressing all forms of oppression					
➤ Climate setting among stakeholders and in the work environment.					
➤ Making all stakeholders feel equal and fairly treated under your leadership.					
➤ Being aware of and managing power – the often subtle ways it is at play in making others feel uncomfortable, harassed and discriminated against.					
➤ Intervening pro-actively, strategically and effectively in disputes.					
➤ Conflict mediation and resolution between stakeholders.					
➤ Familiarity with Collective Agreement and role of the union					
➤ Familiarity with leadership role to implement policies and procedures related to relevant workplace legislation.					