



Embracing Diversity

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In today's world, the image of the melting pot is no longer accurate. Think salad bowl instead. People seek acceptance of their differences. For some, diversity is recognition of skin color, ethnic background, sexual orientation, income levels, class or location. Others consider diversity to be acceptance of their individual styles or abilities. Still others may define diversity in other ways, and all are correct.

Communities include many different cultures. Even specific cultures may have important intergroup differences. Therefore, to be successful, coalitions need to identify, learn about and include members of the different cultures that exist in their communities. In this way, a coalition's vision can better reflect the diverse perspectives of how the coalition would like the community to look five to ten years in the future.

Defining Cultural Competence

The Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) requires that Cultural Competence be integrated into each of the five steps of the SPF process (assessment, capacity, planning, implementation and evaluation), yet this is not always easy to do. One reason is that it is difficult to define the term "Cultural Competence".

The National Center for Cultral Competence* actually provides 12 definitions of cultural competence. Some commonalities in their definitions are:

- **Culture** involves behaviors, attitudes, policies, practices, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, and values supported by a racial, ethnic, religious or social group or within a system, organization or program.
- **Competence** implies having the capacity to function effectively in cross-cultural situations; displaying sensitivity and the ability to honor and respect the beliefs, language, interpersonal styles and behaviors of members of different groups.

**To review additional definitions, visit the National Center for Cultural Competence Web site at <http://www.ncccurrericula.info/culturalcompetence.html>*

Achieving cultural competence is a vital part of effective prevention efforts. The process of becoming culturally competent is life-long and requires a conscious and deliberate commitment to acquire understanding. This chapter is designed to assist coalitions in negotiating the challenges associated with cultural competence as it relates to building capacity. Working with people from other cultures can arouse emotions such as fear, anger, anxiety and arrogance. Working with people from other cultures can also inspire emotions like curiosity, wonder, joy and compassion. The difference between the two extremes in emotion is often found in relationships. The suggestions and tools provided in this chapter focus upon building relationships.

Prevention Terminology: Using Words that Work for Everyone

My grandfather fought for the U.S. in World War I before he was even allowed to be a citizen of the United States. He came home a war hero but not a citizen. In order to become a citizen of the United States, he had to be declared "competent" by a federal agent. All Indian people had to be declared "competent" before they were allowed to be a citizen. This remains an extremely offensive issue to this day, so the word "competent" has very negative connotations for Indian people.

*Ernie St. Germaine, Intercultural Leadership Initiative, Vilas and Oneida Counties, WI,
Northwoods Coalition member*

Critical Elements of Embracing Diversity

The following suggestions are designed to assist in reaching out to people from other cultures, inviting them to become actively involved in the work of the coalition.

- Build personal relationships- this is the most critical strategy to becoming a culturally competent coalition.
- Connect within- find someone who knows the culture and is willing to provide guidance and support in the coalitions efforts to become inclusive.
- Be patient- developing trust between communities with historic tensions may take years.
- Be a true ally - work across systems and politics to compliment and strengthen the possibility of change for all communities.
- Accept and respect differences- develop individual and coalition mechanisms that identify and respond to differences in cultural behaviors or learning styles.
- Integrate cultural dynamics into every aspect of coalition work.
- Adapt strategies, programs and best practices to fit local cultural norms and traditions.
- Understand the dynamics of historical cultural interactions in the community.
- Make sure the invitation to join the coalition is not perceived as tokenism*. This is especially important if tokenism has occurred in your community in the past.

** Tokenism is the practice or policy of making no more than a token effort or gesture, as in offering opportunities to minorities equal to those of the majority. (Dictionary.com)*

Cultural Competence Continuum

Research suggests that cultural competence occurs along a continuum starting with the negative forces of cultural destructiveness and ending in cultural proficiency. In order to become more deliberate in embracing diversity, coalitions can determine where they currently stand and develop a plan to move along the continuum. Coalitions have found utilizing the tool called *Cultural Competence Continuum*, included in this chapter, can assist in this process.

Continuing Education on Cultural Competence

The National Center for Cultural Competence offers a module series* that centers on four core content areas:

- Cultural Awareness
- Cultural Self-Assessment (includes self-discovery exercises)
- The Process of Inquiry – Communicating in a Multicultural Environment
- Public Health in a Multicultural Environment

** The series is directed toward health care providers, but much of the information is also relevant to those in the prevention field.*

View or download these National Center for Cultural Competence modules at the following Web site: <http://www.ncccurricula.info/modules.html>

Seeking Terms That Build Community

We have formed our own word for the SPF term of cultural competency: Gitchitwaweninge (gih chih twuh way nin gay). “Gitchitwaweninge” means to behave in a very respectful way. To do things with the attitude of making others feel good, feel honored and respected.

As a young boy, I was at a feast with my grandpa and grandma. She had brought food but when she noticed certain elders there, she gave me a kettle of fish head soup and told me to bring it over by one particular elder, place it by him then sit quietly near him. Since he was visiting with some other people, I did not dare interrupt him. I placed the kettle near him and sat on a stump nearby. The elder man went on with the story he was telling then as he finished, he finally noticed the kettle. Then he noticed me, held the entire kettle aloft to the sky world and began an oration on the life of all the fish in creation. He then thanked all the grandma’s who keep these old medicine foods alive by cooking these delicacies. And finally, he thanked the creator for the messengers who carry these good medicines to old timers like himself.

In this entire process, grandma connected me with my first clan teacher who began his teaching that day. Without a formal introduction, without ceremony, he and I were connected. The ceremony of food and medicines connected us in a spiritual way.

I have never forgotten that moment in time in the way it made me feel that day and how it continues to make me feel today. This was one of many gitchitwaweninge teachings I had in my young life that helped to fashion who I am as Anishinaabe.

Minode’e Bineshi, Ernie St. Germaine, Intercultural Leadership Initiative, Vilas and Oneida Counties, WI, Nothwoods Coalition member

A tool is provided on the following page:

Cultural Competence Continuum- University of Minnesota Duluth, Department of Social Work

The enclosed workbook CD includes the tool listed above plus the following:

Elements of Culture- Health Promotion Resource Center

Cultural Competence Continuum

This has been adapted for agencies and professionals.

Cultural Destructiveness (is intentionally destructive)	Cultural Incapacity (is not intentionally destructive but lacks capacity to help people of color)	Cultural Blindness (expresses a philosophy of being unbiased)	Cultural Pre-Competence	Basic Cultural Competence	Advanced Cultural Competence (Proficiency)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - practices cultural genocide (e.g. Boarding schools for Native Americans) - dehumanizes or subhumanizes clients of color 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - takes paternal posture toward "lesser" races - disproportionately applies resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - believes that color or culture make no difference; we're all the same - believes helping approaches used by dominant culture are universally acceptable and universally applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - realizes its weaknesses in serving minorities and attempts to make specific improvement - tries experiments; hires minority staff; explores how to reach clients; trains staff on cultural sensitivity; recruits minorities for their boards and advisory committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has acceptance and respect for differences - engages in continuing self-assessment regarding culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - holds culture in high esteem - adds to knowledge base by doing research, developing new approaches based on culture, publishing results of demonstration projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - denies clients access to their natural helpers or healers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discriminates based on whether clients "know their place" and believes in the supremacy of dominant culture helpers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - thinks all people should be served with equal effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has commitment to civil rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - makes adaptations to service models in order to meet client needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hires staff who are specialists in culturally competent practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - removes children from their families on the basis of race 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - may support segregation as a desirable policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ignores cultural strengths, encourages assimilation, and blames clients for their problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - may feel a false sense of accomplishment that prevents further movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - works to hire unbiased workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - advocates for cultural competence throughout the system and improved relations between cultures throughout society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - risks client's well-being in social or medical experiments without their knowledge or consent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enforces racist policies and maintains stereotypes - promotes ignorance and unrealistic fears of people of color 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - follows cultural deprivation model (problems are the result of inadequate cultural resources) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - may engage in tokenism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seeks advice and consultation from minority community 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maintains discriminatory hiring practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - practices institutionalized racism 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gives subtle "not welcome" messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sets ethnocentric eligibility for services 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has lower expectations of minority clients 				

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