

Cultural Competence

GUIDELINES

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One Department, One Vision, One Mission, One Core Set of Values

The Department recognizes that everyone has a culture and we have a commitment to promote respect and understanding of diverse cultures, social groups, and individual attributes. The mission, vision, and values of DSHS embrace inclusivity that supports people and communities in reaching their potential. To further that mission, the following guidelines provide a framework for cultural competence and culturally responsive service delivery.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is committed to “Cultural Competence” through promoting respect and understanding of diverse cultures, social groups, and individuals. To achieve that commitment we develop and maintain a high performing workforce that provides meaningful service access and improves outcomes for all clients. We deliver culturally responsive services and our workforce reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. Each DSHS administration ensures Cultural Competence is integrated into the overall organizational culture and ongoing business practices.

DSHS defines culture in a broad sense. It is the values, attitudes, beliefs, experiences and customs shared and transmitted by a group of people. It is “knowledge and collective experience” shared across generations within a family or community contributing to a person’s sense of identity.

Cultural Competence is the behaviors of individuals and the departments policies that come together enabling individuals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. It promotes respect and understanding of diverse cultures and social groups, and an appreciation of each individual’s unique attributes.

Being Culturally Responsive is the ability and willingness to accept and respond to another individual in a manner that demonstrates an effort to understand such subtle differences as communication style, problem-solving, values, conflict resolution styles, etc.

For the purpose of this guideline, culture includes the dimensions that define the individual. The following are examples of those dimensions, in alphabetical order. There are many other dimensions each of us possess:

- Age
- Class
- Communication styles
- Educational background
- Ethnicity
- Family status
- Gender
- Gender identity and expression
- Geographic location
- Group identity
- Job classification / job function
- Language
- Marital status
- Military experience
- Organizational background
- Organizational level
- Parental status
- Physical abilities and qualities
- Race
- Relationships and group affiliations
- Religious beliefs
- Sexual orientation
- Socioeconomic status
- Thinking styles
- Work experience

Being Culturally Competent is:

1. Possessing the ability to work and deliver services from a cross-cultural perspective.
2. Continually learning.
3. The way we do business, not just a special program.
4. Identifying and providing a continuum for individuals and organizations to plan and monitor progress.
5. Increased by the actions of all individuals and organizations.

The DSHS vision of Cultural Competence:

1. Continuous self assessment.
2. Applying strategies to mediate and resolve conflicts and misunderstandings that stem from cultural differences.
3. Expanding employees' cultural knowledge, and adapting services to meet culturally unique needs.
4. Developing effective service delivery that includes input from culturally diverse communities and individuals.
5. Advocating for and supporting culturally competent and responsive programs.
6. Measuring the impact that services have on culturally diverse populations.

Objectives

These guidelines seek to increase the effectiveness of DSHS through planned and specific practices that increase Cultural Competence awareness for the department's workforce.

Each administration must ensure Cultural Competence is integrated into its overall organizational culture. Each administration will develop action plans that support and guide staff in delivering DSHS services through the following actions.

1. Each Administration shall provide training to employees to understand the relevance of Cultural Competence in the work environment. The training is.
 - a. Based on regularly conducted self-assessments
 - b. Designed to help employees acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge about the diversity and cultural environments of the communities served
 - c. Allows DSHS employees' to gain the knowledge/experience to work effectively within culturally diverse communities.
2. DSHS employees shall have access to the Cultural Competence website sponsored by the Diversity Affairs Office.
3. DSHS shall provide public relations materials outlining services to culturally diverse communities.
4. DSHS continually reviews practices in culturally competent services, improves those services, and identifies training needed to implement the improvements.

Under These Cultural Competence Guidelines, Each Administration Will:

1. Increase and maintain the capacity of staff to expand their Cultural Competence skills and knowledge to provide culturally competent services by developing and implementing cultural competence standards, conducting and analyzing organizational self-assessments, and developing and providing cultural competence training.
2. Increase linguistic and translation capacity by identifying core data elements used to report the primary language of applicants and recipients of services:
 - a. Continually update data collection systems to improve service delivery
 - b. Develop guidelines to disaggregate available data to identify diversity of clients receiving services
3. Ensure performance based contract language requires service providers to provide culturally competent services and monitor for compliance.

Cultural Competence And Performance Management

The DSHS Executive Leadership Team acknowledges that embedding Cultural Competence into the Department structure is an opportunity for DSHS to develop and grow into the agency envisioned by the DSHS Framework for the Future. Human Resources will provide leadership through incorporating Cultural Competence into the Talent Management model.

Talent Management refers to the process of attracting highly skilled workers to DSHS, developing and integrating new workers, and developing and retaining current workers. The Talent Management model illustrates key processes and enhanced practices that recognize and support employees, to include the following: Workforce Planning, Recruitment, On-boarding, identifying and training to Competencies, Performance Management, Employee and Leadership Development, Succession Planning, Career Management, and Retention.

Supervisors are expected to clearly explain the behavior based competencies that support a culturally competent and responsive, accepting environment, and provide coaching and training if necessary. These competencies are incorporated into the Position Description Form, and Performance Development Plan.

Behaviors that interfere with creating and supporting a culturally competent and responsive environment may be corrected through appropriate coaching, counseling, or disciplinary action.