



Administrative Policy 7.22

Subject: Cultural Competence

Information Contact: DSHS Diversity Affairs

Authorizing Source: [DSHS Cultural Competence Guidelines](#)

DSHS Administrative Policy

[Administrative Policy 7.01](#) - American Indian Administrative Policy

[Administrative Policy 7.02](#) - Equal Access to Services for Individuals with Disabilities

[Administrative Policy 7.20](#) - Communication Access for Persons Who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind and Speech Disabled

[Administrative Policy 7.21](#) - Access to Services for Clients Who are Limited English Proficient (LEP)

[Administrative Policy 14.10](#) - Accessible Meetings

[Administrative Policy 18.26](#) - Reasonable Accommodation Services

[Administrative Policy 18.81](#) - Nondiscrimination in Direct Client Services

[Administrative Policy 18.66](#) – Discrimination and Harassment Prevention

Washington State Rule

[WAC 388-271](#) - Limited English Proficient Services

Governor's Order

[Executive Order 96-04](#)

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Guidelines

Effective Date: September 22, 2011

Revised: New

Approved By: [Original signed by Patricia K. Lashway](#)
Senior Director, Policy and External Relations

Purpose:

To create and maintain an environment within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) that values and supports cultural competence and embraces respect for the individual differences of our employees and clients. 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. Each DSHS administration will ensure cultural competence is integrated into the overall organizational culture and ongoing business.

Scope:

This policy applies to all administrations and employees of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

Definitions:

Culture: DSHS defines culture in a broad sense, to include values, beliefs, experiences and cultural attitudes contributing to a person’s sense of identity. 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.

Cultural Competence: A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals which enables individuals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. It promotes respect and understanding of diverse cultures and social groups and recognizes each individual’s unique attributes.

Cultural Responsiveness: Cultural responsiveness is the capacity to respond to the cultural differences and issues of a diverse work group, especially within an organization. Those differences may include such subtle items as communication style, problem-solving, values, conflict resolution styles, etc.

Diversity: For the purposes of this policy, diversity includes and is not limited to the following dimensions listed alphabetically:

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

Policy:

Using the DSHS Cultural Competence Guidelines, each administration will develop action plans that support and guide staff delivering DSHS services in a culturally competent manner by:

1. Training all employees on the relevance of cultural competence in the work environment and providing tools to aide employees in achieving cultural competence.
2. Continually seeking potential improvements and best practices to provide culturally competent and responsive services and identifying ongoing training needs.
3. Building and maintaining partnerships that promote cultural competence by inviting clients and communities to participate in planning, delivering, and evaluating services.
4. Ensuring recruiting, hiring, performance management and retention practices achieve a diverse and culturally competent workforce.
5. Conducting outreach efforts to department employees, sovereign partners and the communities we serve throughout the state.
6. Providing bilingual staff resources and support to remain qualified and appropriately certified.
7. Including the requirement to provide culturally competent and responsive services in the performance contracts with service providers.

While each administration is responsible for developing and implementing their individual plans to enhance and support cultural competence as it pertains to their specific workforce, the Office of Diversity Affairs is responsible for creating guidelines to enhance and support cultural competence within the Department. The Office of Diversity Affairs will ensure standardization by reviewing each administration's plan and providing feedback regarding the thoroughness and implementation strategy of each administration's action plan. All levels of management are expected to implement and support activities that enhance the cultural competence of their staff.

****NOTE: "good faith effort"**

Employees are responsible for complying with all applicable state and federal regulations. Employees are also responsible for reporting harassment or discrimination to their supervisor, or to someone in the employee's chain of command if they are not comfortable disclosing the harassment or discrimination to their supervisor.