

National Center for Cultural Competence

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A DEFINITION OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

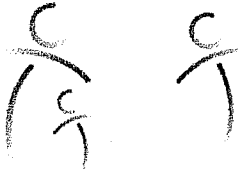
The National Center for Cultural Competence embraces a conceptual framework and model for achieving cultural competence adapted from the work of Cross et al., (1989). The NCCC uses this framework and model to underpin all of its activities. Cultural competence requires that organizations:

- have a congruent, defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally;
- have the capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge, and (5) adapt to the diversity and cultural contexts of communities they serve; and
- incorporate the above into all aspects of policymaking, administration, practice, and service delivery and systematically involve consumers, key stakeholders and communities.

Cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period of time.

Individuals, organizations, and systems are at various levels of awareness, knowledge and skills along the cultural competence continuum.

Cross, T., Bazron, B., Dennis, K., & Isaacs, M. (1989). *Towards a culturally competent system of care. Vol. 1.* Washington, DC: The National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health, Georgetown University Child Development Center.



Mission

The mission of the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) is to increase the capacity of health care and mental health care programs to design, implement and evaluate culturally and linguistically competent service delivery systems.

Definitions of linguistic competence vary considerably. Such definitions have evolved from diverse perspectives, interests and needs and are incorporated into state legislation, Federal statutes and programs, private sector organizations and academic settings. The following definition, developed by the National Center for Cultural Competence, provides a foundation for determining linguistic competence in health care, mental health and other human service delivery systems. It encompasses a broad spectrum of constituency groups that could require language assistance or other supports from an organization, agency, or provider.








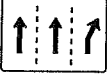




Linguistic Competence

The capacity of an organization and its personnel to communicate effectively, and convey information in a manner that is easily understood by diverse audiences including persons of limited English proficiency, those who have low literacy skills or are not literate, and individuals with disabilities. Linguistic competency requires organizational and provider capacity to respond effectively to the health and mental health literacy needs of populations served. The organization must have policy, structures, practices, procedures, and dedicated resources to support this capacity. This may include, but is not limited to, the use of:

- bilingual/bicultural or multilingual/multicultural staff;
- cross-cultural communication approaches;
- cultural brokers;
- foreign language interpretation services including distance technologies;
- sign language interpretation services;
- multilingual telecommunication systems;
- videoconferencing and telehealth technologies;
- TTY and other assistive technology devices;
- computer assisted real time translation (CART) or viable real time transcriptions (VRT);
- print materials in easy to read, low literacy, picture and symbol formats;
- materials in alternative formats (e.g., audiotape, Braille, enlarged print);
- varied approaches to share information with individuals who experience cognitive disabilities;
- materials developed and tested for specific cultural, ethnic and linguistic groups;
- translation services including those of:
 - legally binding documents (e.g., consent forms, confidentiality and patient rights statements, release of information, applications)
 - signage
 - health education materials
 - public awareness materials and campaigns; and
 - ethnic media in languages other than English (e.g., television, radio, Internet, newspapers, periodicals).

Developed by Tawara D. Goode and Wendy Jones, 8/00, Revised 8/03, 9/08.

Watch for Signs Along the Road!

ROAD SIGN ALERT	PROGRAM, ORGANIZATIONAL, OR SYSTEM CHALLENGES
Detour 	<p>Efforts may be new or well underway, but numerous obstacles or barriers may occur, resulting in circuitous routes and slow progress.</p>
Stop Sign 	<p>Efforts come to a halt due to changes in leadership, organizational priorities, fiscal allocations, internal or external resistance, staff turnover and attrition, and sociopolitical contexts.</p>
U-Turn 	<p>Efforts may be reversed due to internal or external advocacy, the threat of or actual litigation, specific events, changes in leadership, rapidly changing demographics, state and federal legal mandates and statutes, or accreditation and licensing requirements.</p>
Proceed with Caution 	<p>Efforts are minimal due to fear or uncertainty about: what course to take; who can lead the efforts (i.e., only members of diverse racial or ethnic groups); loss or change in the power structure; reluctance to ask overworked staff to take on one more challenge; and perceptions that efforts are a passing trend.</p>
Hidden Entrance 	<p>The benefits of efforts are often difficult to see when no structures are in place to track and measure progress over time. Many efforts build and rely upon the belief that training is the path to the hidden entrance. Investment in this strategy alone yields few results.</p>
Work Zone 	<p>A core group of stakeholders may be involved in leading efforts over time and may tire during the journey; others may be asked at certain junctures to assist with initiatives that require specific knowledge or skill sets. The pace may accelerate or decelerate for various reasons.</p>
Divided Highway 	<p>Efforts can be thwarted by: opposing viewpoints; overt or passive resistance; differing perceptions of urgency and need; perceived or actual differences in commitment; disputes over amount and allocation of resources (fiscal and human); rivalries between/within cultural groups; a board of directors that is not "on board"; differing opinions about who should be included under the umbrella of "culture"; and political issues that polarize communities (e.g., immigration).</p>
New Traffic Pattern 	<p>Efforts to increase staff diversity, if not well planned and managed, can result in tokenism, isolation, inequitable distribution of work, power struggles, and insecurities among staff who feel their skills are less valued than those of newcomers.</p> <p>Efforts to learn about and engage diverse or new/emerging communities will require: acquiring cultural knowledge (e.g., belief systems, cultural practices and norms); differing approaches to the delivery of services and supports; new skill sets for staff and volunteers; additional and/or reallocated resources; new and expanded partnerships; new technologies; participatory and inclusive research strategies and methodologies; reciprocal transfer of knowledge and skills among all collaborators and partners; and economic benefits for community collaborators.</p>
Hazardous Driving Conditions 	<p>Efforts may result in tension, discord, or conflict. Such issues must be attended to in an effective, timely, and sensitive manner. Knowledge and skill sets to address the hazards include cross-cultural communication, conflict resolution, negotiation, mediation, anti-bias and anti-racism policy and practice, and leadership development.</p>
Watch for Pedestrians & Cyclists 	<p>Those responsible for leading efforts must be alert to individuals who are most vulnerable on the road. Circumstances and issues of vulnerability may change in nature and intensity over time. Addressing stress, promoting self-care, celebrating small and large victories, and providing incentives all help to sustain the journey.</p>
Slow Speed 	<p>Efforts must be viewed in the context of organizational and systems change, which are long-term processes. Leadership must focus on modulating speed (e.g., setting reasonable timelines for goals, having courage to push when efforts are stuck in neutral or moving in reverse, having patience to travel below the speed limit when necessary). Leadership must also attend to organizational readiness for change; the pace of change is often impacted by leadership's failure to assess readiness for change or to tailor efforts based on the well-defined stages of organizational development.</p>
Toll Ahead 	<p>Efforts cannot be successful without dedicating both fiscal and human resources for the journey. These are an integral aspect of budget development. Often these efforts are the first to go during times of fiscal constraint. Clear policy, careful planning, and advocacy are needed to estimate and pay for costs associated with the journey.</p>

Developed by Tawara D. Goode. Excerpt from *And the Journey Continues...* (2007), National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development.