

Maryland School Mental Health Alliance*

Cultural Competence Information for Parents and Caregivers

Definition

A culturally competent clinician is knowledgeable in understanding, approaching, and treating the problems of culturally diverse groups. They have an awareness of the assumptions and values they hold that influence their work with clients and are able to provide effective services that are respectful of their client's race, ethnicity, social class, religion or faith, and sexual orientation.

Why Do We Care?

The cultural differences that exist between patient and therapist are often numerous (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, educational level, religion, and language). Clinicians who are culturally competent are able to provide more effective services by providing accurate diagnoses and identifying appropriate treatment approaches. Research indicates that when clinicians are culturally competent their clients are less likely to drop out of treatment and are more satisfied with the services that are provided.

What Can We Do About It?

When seeking mental health services for your children or yourself, consider:

- Does the professional have experience working with someone of your race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation?
- Is the professional sensitive to your cultural differences and demonstrate an awareness of your cultural norms?
- Does the professional have an appreciation for learning more about your culture?
- Does the professional respect your beliefs and values?
- Has your culture been taken into account in the development of the plans and goals for treatment?
- Do you and your children feel accepted and valued by the professional?

Key Resources/Links:

Closing the Health Gap, a national campaign that is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is dedicated to improving the health of ethnic and minority populations. For more information visit the *Closing the Health Gap* website at <http://www.healthgap.omhrc.gov/index.htm>

The ***CMHS Mental Health Services Locator*** website provides comprehensive information about mental health services and resources. You can find treatment facilities, support services, as well as consumer, family, and advocacy organizations. Visit the website at <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases/>

Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity- A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. This report documents the disparities in access, quality and availability of mental health services for ethnic minorities and proposes several recommendations for improvement. This report can be retrieved from <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/cre/sma-01-3613.pdf>

National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care: A Final Report, was published by The Office of Minority Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This document outlines standards that should be implemented in organizations to ensure culturally and linguistically appropriate services for ethnic minorities, which can aid in the elimination of disparities in health care. The document can be retrieved from <http://www.omhrc.gov/assets/pdf/checked/finalreport.pdf>

The ***New Freedom Commission on Mental Health Subcommittee on Cultural Competence*** report their findings about the disparities in health care, the role of culture in service delivery, and make several policy recommendations for improving the health care system.

http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov/subcommittee/CulturalCompetence_013103.doc

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Office of Minority Health. ***What is Cultural Competency?*** This document describes cultural competency and can be retrieved from <http://www.omhrc.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=11>

**Developed by the Center for School Mental Health (<http://csmh.umaryland.edu>) in collaboration with the Maryland School Mental Health Alliance.*