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**Cultural Diversity Learning Guide**

**What is culture?**

The values, beliefs, standards, language, thinking patterns, behavioral norms, communications styles, etc. shared by a group of people. It guides decisions and actions of a group through time. We have an obligation to be respectful and sensitive to another's belief system. Healthcare workers must be culturally competent and comfortable with those they serve. Healthcare workers should understand how their own personal biases and values influence communication with patients, families, and co-workers.

**Common manifestations of culture**:

* Religion
* Ethnicity (Race)
* National Origin (Language)
* Gender

**Less obvious manifestations of culture:**

* Age
* Educational Status
* Mobility (including handicaps)
* Sexual Orientation

**Cultural Sensitivity**

The ability to be open to learning about and accepting of different cultural groups.

**Multiculturalism**

The recognition and acknowledgement that society is pluralistic. In addition to the dominant cultural, there exists many other cultures based around ethnicity, sexual orientation, geography, religion, gender, and class.

**Cultural Competence**

The understanding of diverse attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, practices, and communication patterns attributable to a variety of factors (such as race, ethnicity, religion, SES, historical and social context, physical or mental ability, age, gender, sexual orientation, or generational and acculturation status).

A health care provider is culturally competent when he/she is able to deliver culturally appropriate and specifically tailored care to patients with diverse values, beliefs, and behaviors.

Providing culturally competent care is an advocated strategy for reducing heath disparities.

**Acquiring Cultural Competence reduces the chance of stereotyping**

* Starts with Awareness
* Grows with Knowledge
* Enhanced with Specific Skills
* Polished through Cross-Cultural Encounters

**Ask yourself these questions**

1. Who are my patients, families and co-workers?
2. How can I learn about them?
3. What are my beliefs about this group?

**Acquire knowledge of the cultural values, beliefs and practices of your patients**

* Ask questions
* Listen
* Account for language issues
* Be aware of communication styles

**Be sensitive to personal health beliefs and practices**

* Special foods, drinks, objects or clothes
* Avoidance of certain foods, people or places
* Customary rituals or people used to treat the illness
* Will the patient take medicine even when he/she doesn't feel sick?
* Is the patient taking other medicines or anything else to help him feel well?
* Who in the family makes decisions about health care?
* Are illnesses treated at home or by a community member?

**Be sensitive to language barriers:**

* Does the patient understand any English?
* Consider literacy level
* Use visual aids and demonstrate procedures
* Check understanding
* Is an interpreter necessary?

**Consider body language:**

* Eye contact
* Touching
* Personal space
* Privacy/modesty

**Other cultural factors to consider:**

* Gender
* Wealth or social status
* Presence of a disability
* Sexual orientation

**Religious/Spiritual factors: Are there sensitivities/beliefs associated with**

* Birth, death
* Certain treatments, blood products
* Prayer, medication and worship
* Food preparation, clothing, special objects, and gender practices

**Ways to Facilitate Communication Across Cultural Boundaries**

1. Recognize differences

2. Build your self-awareness

3. Describe and identify, then interpret

4. Don’t assume your interpretation is correct

5. Verbalize your own non-verbal signs

 6. Share your experience honestly

7. Acknowledge any discomfort, hesitation, or concern

8. Practice politically correct communication

9. Give your time and attention when communicating

10.Don’t evaluate or judge