

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Cultural Competence is a continuous learning process that builds knowledge, awareness, skills and capacity to identify, understand, and respect the unique beliefs, values, customs, languages and traditions of all Ohioans in order to provide effective programs and services.

Source: State of Ohio, 2011

Linguistic Competence is 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, individuals with disabilities, and those who are deaf or hard of hearing. 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.

Source: National Center for Cultural Competence, 2009

Cultural and Linguistic Competency, therefore, is the capacity for individuals and organizations to work and communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations through the adoption and implementation of strategies to ensure appropriate awareness, attitudes, and actions and through the use of policies, structures, practices, procedures, and dedicated resources that support this capacity.

RELATED CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE TERMS*

Bilingual: A term describing a person who has some degree of proficiency in two languages. A high level of bilingualism is the most basic of the qualifications of a competent interpreter but, by itself, does not ensure the ability to interpret.

Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS): Services that are respectful of and responsive to individual cultural health beliefs and practices, preferred languages, health literacy levels, and communication needs and employed by all members of an organization (regardless of size) at every point of contact.

CLAS Standards: The framework for culturally and linguistically appropriate services issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. The National CLAS Standards are intended to inform, guide, and facilitate practices related to culturally and linguistically appropriate health service delivery.

Culture: The integrated pattern of thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions associated, wholly or partially, with racial, ethnic, or linguistic groups, as well as with religious, spiritual, biological, geographical, or sociological characteristics. Culture is dynamic in nature, and individuals may identify with multiple cultures over the course of their lifetimes. **Some elements of culture may include:**

- ❖ Dress
- ❖ Gender Roles
- ❖ Food
- ❖ Decision-making process
- ❖ Sexuality
- ❖ Family Roles
- ❖ Rituals
- ❖ Public/social behaviors
- ❖ Religion
- ❖ Healthcare
- ❖ Values
- ❖ Rites of Passage

Disability: A physical, sensory, emotional, or cognitive impairment that substantially limits a major life activity and fulfilling of social roles.

Diversity: A collective mixture characterized by differences and similarities that are applied in pursuit of organizational objectives. Workforce diversity includes race, sex and gender identity, ethnicity, physical ability, religion, belief systems, sexual orientation, age, parental status, economic status, geographic background, etc.

Health Literacy: The degree to which an individual has the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

Multi-cultural: Of, relating to, or including several cultures.

Plain Language: A strategy for making written and oral information easier to understand; communication that users can understand the first time they read or hear it. A plain language document is one in which people can find what they need, understand what they find, and act appropriately on that understanding.

*Definitions adapted from the National Office of Minority Health and The National Center for Cultural Competence