

Appendix G

Cultural Competency Guidelines and Checklist

Guidelines on Cultural Competency

Survivors and children in domestic violence and child welfare systems can experience discrimination based on race, gender, economic status, English language skills, and immigrant status, among other factors. Poor women of color encounter multiple barriers, such as lack of access to services, authorities withholding information about available services or not offering them as an option, language barriers, lack of care or professionalism of caseworkers or advocates, and lack of cultural understanding.

A significant amount of research has documented the overrepresentation of certain racial and ethnic groups, including African Americans and Native Americans, in the child welfare system when compared with their representation in the general population (e.g., Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity, 2006; Derezotes, Poertner, & Testa, 2005; Hill, 2005, 2006; McRoy, 2005; Overrepresentation of minority youth in care, 2008). While the extent of this overrepresentation varies significantly across different regions of the country, it exists at some level in virtually every locality.

Here are three pieces of legislation with which service providers should be familiar.

1. **VAWA 2013:** The Violence against Women Act (VAWA) was reauthorized in 2013 to continue and improve upon lifesaving services for all victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking, including Native American women, immigrants, LGBT victims, college students and youth, and public housing residents. VAWA 2013 also authorized appropriate funding to provide for VAWA's vitally important programs and protections, without imposing limitations that undermine effectiveness or victim safety.
2. **Civil Rights Act 1964:** Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. National origin discrimination includes, among other things, failing to provide meaningful access to individuals who have limited English proficiency (LEP). Executive Order 13166 requires federal agencies that provide federal financial assistance to develop guidance to clarify the language access obligations of recipients of such assistance.
3. **ADA 1990:** The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation. It also mandates the establishment of telephone relay services.

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Checklist of Culturally Competent Facilities, Practices, and Services

This checklist may be helpful to various programs and individuals as they assess their capacity to engage diverse populations.

Facilities

- Examine shelter spaces, decorations, food, recreational and printed materials, and personal care items for cultural relevancy.
- Consider making restrooms gender neutral.
- Ensure facilities are accessible to people with physical disabilities, including people who are blind or hearing impaired.

Practices

- Ensure clients can access materials in their language.
- Ask respectfully what pronouns transgendered clients prefer.
- Avoid asking children to interpret communications for you and their parents.
- Use gender-neutral terms until the client identifies the abuser's gender. For example, ask "What is your partner's name?" instead of "What is his name?"
- Use culturally sensitive assessment tools that control for bias.
- Distinguish between the effects of poverty and the choice to neglect a child. Failing to do so can facilitate disproportionate representation of minority groups who are overrepresented in lower socioeconomic classes.
- Extend definitions of kin to include anyone not related by blood but having some other bond through which the client identifies that person as family. For example, members of someone's Tribe may be considered family.
- Connect families with culturally and linguistically appropriate services.
- Partner with local churches and community organizations to increase foster families varying in race and culture.

Services

- Learn about non-traditional interventions and services that may serve certain populations better than others. For example, some groups may find community supports more beneficial than individualized services.
- Become familiar with the availability of U-Visas for non-citizen clients who are victims of domestic violence or other similar crimes.