



Cultural Competency Assessment

Cultural Competency

The basic premise around “cultural competency” is not new, but the growing awareness of the concept for organizations and its potential role and place in organizational development, service delivery, and community development is. It is a tool and a method for understanding as well as a way of “doing things.” As defined by the originators of the term, “Cultural Competency is a developmental process in which organizations or individuals gain a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.”

Most often, the idea of cultural competence has been focused upon two basic, yet different areas: (1) The Organizational Level, and (2) The Service Delivery Level. In many cases, these two levels are connected under one overall conceptual approach to cultural competence with an internal (organization) and an external (service delivery) aspect. A third level, “Community,” has been developed as an additional competence for those groups or programs that tend to do outreach or whose work often deals with interactions beyond a “one to one” service setting.

Cultural Awareness

For this assessment, the term that will be used is “Cultural Awareness.” On most levels it is similar to “Cultural Competency” since it identifies the same basic concepts. Both terms specifically characterize the extent to which cultural knowledge is known and shared within a group or organization and among specific individuals within the organization, but in this specific outline, “Cultural Awareness” extends beyond “cross-cultural” boundaries.

In this important facet, Cultural Awareness relates to the idea that in some cases we are not dealing strictly with “culture” in terms of racial or ethnic categories, but rather, gender, age, or even general behaviors and attitudes. In these cases, “awareness” is key to understanding the social dynamics at play, and determining the best courses of action to take organizationally and individually. For this reason, expanding the concept of “culture” to include more general attributes is crucial in this process.

Cultural Awareness takes as its focal point the person in an entire range of cultural settings that includes any and all relative factors that relate to understanding some of the basics in human behavior and attitudes, cultural factors inherent in human action, and the understanding that everyone brings “culture” with them. This notion applies not only to those people within a given service population, but to the staff and organizations within those areas as well. In this way, the entire system comes under review, but specific pieces can be targeted and addressed.



Organization and Service Delivery Cultural Awareness

The purpose behind developing cultural awareness at the organizational level stems from the recognition that it is difficult to have “culturally competent” staff and service delivery if administrative personnel and existing policies are not aligned as well. It allows the department, program, or organization to act not just responsively to situations, but with a sense of uniformity of understanding.

In addition, specific barriers to effective administration, problems related to cultural differences, and other issues at the organizational level can be identified. Although it may not be possible to resolve such problems, an understanding of their presence within the system, especially at a relatively precise point, can be highlighted.

Service Delivery and Cultural Awareness

Conceptually speaking, a culturally based approach seeks to place individuals from ANY background as “beings of culture.” It does not require one to know a great amount of detail regarding the culture(s) of those being served, rather, the goal is for staff to recognize instances where culture comes into play. Decision making, when necessary, can then be guided by knowing the various issues related to dealing with people on a cultural level.

However, the necessity of having persons on staff who are adept at handling and understanding various cultural situations will be essential in building Cultural Awareness at an individual and organizational capacity. This process does not necessitate a formal re-organization or intense personnel training, but rather, it can identify an ad-hoc system that comes into play when needed. As such, this method of developing Cultural Awareness allows for a fluid and less invasive approach to incorporating these concepts into the daily work of individuals within an organization. A knowledge of existing policies, the various cultural backgrounds within the area, and an established (if somewhat informal) system set in place for dealing with these scenarios must be created for this concept to work.

American Indians and Cultural Awareness – Indians of the Southeast

Although cultural awareness does not, in general, prioritize specific cultural backgrounds, a note should be given on the unique character of the Indians of the Southeastern United States. In contemporary society, it has been established practice to identify “American Indians” as a single social group, and although many experienced professionals understand the diversity that exists within this grouping, standard practice often calls for the more generic “Indian” appellation. While the tribes of the former Southeast have overlapping social and cultural features with other Native American tribes, there are enough distinctive cultural ideologies between them that make this standard approach improper. Ideas related to medicine, kinship, and standards of behavior must be understood on a more specific cultural level. For this reason, “Cultural Awareness” needs to account for both a “general” American Indian AND a specific “tribal” awareness.



Cultural Awareness Survey

Program

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
The program/department I work in displays cultural awareness with our service population.	1	2	3	4	5
The program/department I work in displays cultural awareness within our own program.	1	2	3	4	5
My program has specific policies in place that demonstrate cultural awareness in how we do our jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
My program has trainings around developing or reinforcing cultural awareness among program administration.	1	2	3	4	5
My program has trainings around developing or reinforcing cultural awareness among program staff.	1	2	3	4	5
My program has developed guidelines that assist staff and personnel that address issues of cultural awareness internally among staff.	1	2	3	4	5
My program has developed guidelines that assist staff and personnel that address issues of cultural awareness for interacting with our service population.	1	2	3	4	5



Cultural Awareness Survey

Service Delivery (Program Level)

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
The way in which we provide services is based upon cultural awareness.	1	2	3	4	5
How we talk to / provide information to / work with people is based upon	a standard service delivery model	a general “Amer. Indian” model	a specific Choctaw cultural model	a case by case model that account for various cultural types	None of these
My program has clear guidelines on how to deal with cultural situations that arise as part of delivering services for our “Indian” population.	1	2	3	4	5
My program has clear guidelines on how to deal with cultural situations that arise as part of delivering services for most of our service population.	1	2	3	4	5
My program acts efficiently and effectively when cultural factors become part of any situation in which I/we have to address. I am able to act efficiently in cultural situations.	1	2	3	4	5
My program acts efficiently and effectively when cultural factors become part of any situation in which I/we have to address. My program is able to act efficiently in cultural situations.	1	2	3	4	5
I believe that having cultural awareness is important for my program to service our population effectively.	Strongly Agree	Mostly Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Strongly Disagree



Cultural Awareness Survey

Service Delivery (Individual)

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I am able to identify when cultural factors arise when I/we deliver services.	1	2	3	4	5
I can provide specific examples when someone has needed my/our services, and their cultural background was an issue in the process.	1	2	3	4	5
My knowledge of the basic cultures I/we service is strong.	1	2	3	4	5
I am good at using my cultural awareness in providing assistance to our service population.	1	2	3	4	5
I believe that having a cultural awareness is important for my job.	Strongly Agree	Mostly Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Strongly Disagree