

Using Cultural Competence to Solve Problems

Interaction Title

Use Cultural Competence to Solve Problems

Activity Intro

Why is this important?

You may be aware that disparities in health outcomes are linked to racial, ethnic, and economic status. Health-related information, policies, and expectations that ignore cultural diversity perpetuates these patterns.

When [Early Care and Education Programs \(ECE\)](#) programs apply principles of cultural and [linguistic competence](#) to health and wellness, children have better outcomes. As a [Child Care Health Consultant \(CCHC\)](#), you can help teachers/caregivers and families bridge differences to benefit the entire program.

In this activity, you will explore how [cultural competence](#) affects the outcomes of situations you might encounter in your practice.

Button text: Next

[Click reveal](#)

Instructions

Click each area to learn more about key characteristics of cultural competence.

Interactive content

Characteristics / clicked item	Revealed content
Willingness to Learn About Other Cultures	A CCHC who strives to promote cultural competence knows there is always more to learn about other people's experiences and backgrounds and demonstrates respect and openness in all interactions. Cultural competence is an ongoing process of self-assessment and learning.
Cross-Cultural Communication Skills	A culturally competent CCHC is sensitive to differences in language and communication styles such as using body language, being outspoken, or relying heavily on shared experiences or storytelling. They will adapt their own approach to interact sensitively with others.
Ability to Recognize Cultural Biases	No one is immune to bias, and it can take different forms. A culturally competent CCHC is aware of their own cultural beliefs and how those affect their interactions with others. They are also aware of the historical and institutional biases that exist in their communities.
Flexibility to Adapt Messages and Services	A culturally competent CCHC will openly explore and understand other points of view. They will identify approaches and adapt practices that are respectful of the ECE community, honor the family's cultural background, and keep all children healthy and safe.
Sensitivity to Power Relationships	Many different relationships intersect in child care settings, and these interactions can create complex power dynamics. A CCHC who is aware of these power structures will be better able to identify issues and work with those involved to successfully address them.

Situations

Interstitial popup

Each of the three different scenarios in this section features a teacher or caregiver with limited [cultural competence](#) which restricts their work with families.

In this activity, you will explore different culturally competent actions you might take using the five characteristics you just learned about. There are multiple ways to support [cultural competence](#), so it's important to explore more than one approach to each scenario.

On-screen instructions

Popup text: Read the scenario, then click each characteristic to learn about an action you might take to support cultural competency within the program.

Scenario 1

Counter text: Scenario 1 of 3

Wheel text: Review these key elements

Text block label	Scenario text
Pages 1/3	An ECE center -based program serves a population of children from diverse backgrounds.
Pages 2/3	As the program staff is updating their parent handbook, the director asks you to recommend some materials on infectious disease.
Pages 3/3	You ask the teachers if there are common recommendations that should be included in the parent handbook about what to do when children are ill. One of the teachers tells you they do not think the parents need information about how to handle mild illness because families use “weird alternative medicine approaches anyway.”

Characteristics & Strategies

Characteristic	Strategy
Willingness to Learn About Other Cultures	You talk with the teacher about her comments, so you can better understand what families may be sharing about their own traditions related to treating illnesses.
Cross-Cultural Communication Skills	You look for opportunities to suggest ways the staff can support families from different backgrounds. They have told you that storytelling is a valued part of some of the families' culture, so you talk with staff about how this approach might guide the development of materials for the family handbook.
Ability to Recognize Cultural Biases	You recognize the teacher's comments may reflect her personal beliefs and attitudes. You ask if it would be okay to discuss her concerns about alternative medicine.
Flexibility to Adapt Messages and Services	You gather resources that are respectful of the staff and families' cultural traditions. You suggest that information shared with families may better reflect the program's cultural diversity. For instance, you could provide examples of illustrative short stories to add to the handbook to make the policies easier to understand.
Sensitivity to Power Relationships	You ask the staff if they are open to discussing the effects of power relationships and the most helpful ways to talk with families about treating illnesses. You talk with staff about how some families will rely on them as their primary source for health information. You discuss how they can use this important role to offer information, while being mindful of the cultural beliefs that form part of each family's identity.

Scenario 2

Counter text: Scenario 2 of 3

Text block label	Scenario text
Pages 1/5	Teachers in an infant classroom are ready to transition their group of children into a toddler classroom. They have discussed this with the mother of one of the children, but she will not give permission to move the child.
Pages 2/5	She has not shared the reason why she will not grant permission. The teachers are very frustrated because they are ready to move all the children together to maintain continuity of care .
Pages 3/5	You encourage the director to invite the mother to join you and observe the child in the classroom, hoping this will offer an opportunity to learn more about the situation. The mother is very excited about how well her child is doing.
Pages 4/5	You help the director use non-judgmental, open-ended questions and learn that her husband has been away from their home for an extended period, caring for his aging parents.
Pages 5/5	The mother shares how difficult this absence has been for her family. She discloses that her husband is the person who makes decisions for their children, and he signs all permission forms.

Characteristics & Strategies

Characteristics	Strategy
Willingness to Learn About Other Cultures	<p>You demonstrate your interest and openness to learn by asking questions in an open-ended, respectful manner. You share what you learn with the classroom teachers, who say they never considered cultural differences.</p> <p>They discuss strategies with you to improve their communication with the family. You speak with the director about meeting with both parents to better understand the family's cultural expectations related to decision-making.</p>
Cross-Cultural Communication Skills	You build on the teachers' interest in improving communication with the family by offering to share a cross-cultural communication tool with them.
Ability to Recognize Cultural Biases	You offer to share a self-reflection assessment tool to help staff understand how their own cultural beliefs might influence their feelings of frustration around interactions with family members.
Flexibility to Adapt Messages and Services	<p>You review the enrollment process and identify opportunities to ask questions about who makes decisions in the family and what to do when the primary decision-maker is unavailable.</p> <p>You and the staff discuss ways to accommodate different styles of decision-making within families and to avoid assumptions about who should sign forms or provide permission.</p>
Sensitivity to Power Relationships	You talk with the staff about how families make decisions in different ways. Together, you identify strategies to help the staff consider these dynamics when speaking with families.

Scenario 3

Counter text: Scenario 3 of 3

Text block label	Scenario text
Pages 1/4	A family child care provider has reached out to you, the CCHC in her community, because they are having problems obtaining the necessary medical records for one of the children in their care.
Pages 2/4	The family has not provided an official immunization record or proof of a current well-child visit for their 3-year-old child.
Pages 3/4	The provider has asked for this information several times, and is concerned about continuing to care for the child without knowing the health history.
Pages 4/4	The provider is increasingly unsure about how to resolve this issue with the family, especially since they do not speak English and the provider does not speak the family's home language.

Characteristics & Strategies

Characteristics	Strategy
Willingness to Learn About Other Cultures	<p>You encourage the provider to consider that families have different experiences with health care. They may not take their child to a health care provider.</p> <p>You suggest having a conversation with the family, with the help of an interpreter if needed, to better understand any barriers to getting the health record.</p>
Cross-Cultural Communication Skills	You encourage the provider to communicate directly with the family, with the help of an interpreter, if needed. Provide community resources to address any language barriers that they identify.
Ability to Recognize Cultural Biases	You encourage the provider to share with you their own values and beliefs about preventive health care services. Urge them to consider that other cultures may have different views and experiences with accessing health care.
Flexibility to Adapt Messages and Services	You suggest exploring the family's questions and concerns in person, as well as following up with resources and tip sheets that have been translated into the family's home language. This reinforces what was said in the face-to-face conversation with written materials.
Sensitivity to Power Relationships	<p>You recognize that there is a power balance issue simply because the provider is a professional providing a service to the family. The family child care provider must enforce the requirement to have health and immunization records.</p> <p>You make sure the provider is aware that a power balance issue does exist, but there are opportunities to build collaborative relationships with the families.</p>

Activity Conclusion

Page 1

Heading	Wrap Up
Page text	<p>Remember, cultural competence develops on a continuum.</p> <p>Miscommunication and misunderstanding are inevitable in working with others, but strengthening our cultural competence through ongoing self-awareness and willingness to learn will result in more effective partnerships with families.</p> <p>As you develop your own cultural competence, you will be better able to support programs as they build their capacity around cultural issues.</p>
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