

Providing Culturally Competent Support Coordination Services

The population of those who experience developmental disabilities is diverse, and disability is just one aspect of identity. Beliefs about, understanding of, and lived experience with disability are shaped by culture. **Culture** involves the learned and shared knowledge that specific groups use to guide behavior and interpret their experience of the world. It includes: thought, communication, language, beliefs, values, practices, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, roles and relationships, and social norms.

Through conversations and the use of planning techniques, Support Coordinators gather and compile information to assist people with developmental disabilities with determining desired life outcomes, supports, and service needs. They partner with people with disabilities, their families, and their teams to develop Person-Centered Planning Tools (PCPT) and Individualized Service Plans (ISP), coordinate supports and services, and monitor the quality of supports and services received as well as progress toward outcomes.

Culture impacts which supports, *if any*, people with disabilities and their families will choose. As one of the earliest points of contact within the disability service system, Support Coordinators should consider the following factors that may affect diverse people with disabilities and their families as they decide to seek supports and navigate the eligibility-determination process:

- immigration status
- language barriers
- lower socioeconomic status
- stigma associated with disability
- traditions that discourage seeking support outside of the family
- lack of, poor understanding of, or reluctance to accept government benefits
- experiences of bias, discrimination, racism, and stereotyping

KEEP IN MIND:

There may be differences in opinions, beliefs, practices, and experiences among those in the same cultural group.



Support Coordinators can maximize participation in planning for and accessing relevant supports by providing culturally competent services. **Culturally competent services** are responsive to the beliefs, attitudes, language, and behaviors of individuals receiving them. To provide culturally competent services, Support Coordinators must:

- acknowledge cultural differences
- understand their own cultural group and related values, assumptions, and biases
- assess how this impacts their ability to support those from other cultural groups
- develop knowledge and skills to effectively work with those from other cultures through ongoing interactions, research, and training
- learn to view behavior within a cultural context
- assist people to find service providers that will respect and support their cultural values, beliefs, and customs, and ensure services are culturally-responsive through monitoring

CULTURALLY COMPETENT PLANNING STRATEGIES

Building Rapport:

- Before visiting or meeting in the person's home, seek information on acceptable behaviors, courtesies, customs, and expectations unique to families of specific cultures or ethnic groups.
- Understand that family is defined differently by different cultures, and this may impact who the person would like to include in the planning team and the role they play.
- Discuss what cultural identity means and how it influences the services and supports a person would like to receive.



Communication:

- Ask about individual and family accessibility needs to ensure full participation in meetings.
- When working with those who speak languages other than English, use bilingual staff or interpreters when needed and attempt to learn and use key words in their language to better communicate.
- Use visual aids, gestures, and physical prompts for those with limited English proficiency.
- Keep in mind that limitations in English proficiency do not reflect someone's intellect or knowledge.
- Use alternative formats and varied approaches to communicate and share information based on cultural, linguistic, and disability-related communication preferences.



Meeting Logistics:

- Be aware of cultural and religious holidays prior to scheduling meetings.
- If meeting outside of the home, make sure the meeting location is accessible and convenient for the person and family.
- If meeting virtually, make sure the person and their family have access to and understanding of technology.
- Consider the economic impact of participating in meetings by limiting any interruptions to work schedules and ensuring cost of transportation is not burdensome.



Planning Conversations & Tools:

- Ask about any religious or cultural practices or traditions the person participates in and would like to maintain or experience.
- Ask about the person's house of worship and any activities they participate in there.
- Keep in mind that some cultures value support strategies that facilitate family and community activities over independence and autonomy.
- Develop a Multiple Identities Chart with the person to identify all groups, roles, and cultures the person represents and the importance they play in their life.



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