**What is Cultural Competence?**

Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals that enable them to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. (Cross et al., 1989*)

**Cultural Competence Framework**

There are seven performance areas or domains which can be used to assess an organization’s level of cultural competence (The Lewin Group, 2002**).

- **Organizational Values**: Perspective and attitudes with respect to the worth and importance of cultural competence, and commitment to provide culturally competent care.
- **Governance**: Goal-setting, policy-making, and other oversight vehicles an organization uses to help ensure the delivery of culturally competent care.
- **Planning and Monitoring/Evaluation**: The mechanisms and processes used for: a) long- and short-term policy, programmatic, and operational cultural competence planning and b) the systems and activities needed to proactively track and assess an organization’s level of cultural competence.
- **Communication**: The exchange of information between the organization/providers and the clients/population, and internally among staff, in ways that promote cultural competence.
- **Staff Development**: An organization’s efforts to ensure staff and other service providers have the requisite attitudes, knowledge and skills for delivering culturally competent services.
- **Organizational Infrastructure**: The organizational resources required to deliver or facilitate delivery of culturally competent services.
- **Services/Interventions**: An organization's delivery or facilitation of clinical, public-health, and health related services in a culturally competent manner.

**Cultural Competence Techniques**

There are several techniques a health care system can adopt in order to improve cultural awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills (AHRQ, 2000***):

- **Interpreter services**: Providing foreign language or American Sign Language interpreter services
- **Recruitment and retention of minority staff**.
- **Training**: Offer cultural competency training to staff.
- **Use of community health workers**.
- **Including family and/or community members in health care decision making where applicable**.
- **Administrative and organizational accommodations**: Make variety of administrative and organizational changes related to clinic locations, hours of operation, network membership, and physical environments to accommodate minority populations.
- **Immersion into another culture**: Members of one cultural group have been reported to develop sensitivity and skills working with another culture by immersing themselves in that culture.
- **Coordinating with traditional healers where necessary**.

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**HRSA/DHHS, Indicators of Cultural Competence in Health Care Delivery Organizations. (The Lewin Group, 2002)