

## **Guiding Principles of Cultural Competency**

### *Overarching Principles*

1. Treat all clients in a non-judgmental way with dignity and respect.
2. Define culture broadly, encompassing an individual's orientation to life; family structure; race; ethnicity; national origin; language; education; art and music; food; spirituality/beliefs; class/socioeconomic status; acculturation; politics; gender; sexual orientation; and other defining characteristics.
3. Recognize and respect that culture is ever changing and evolving.
4. Recognize the diversity within and among multi-cultural communities.
5. Recognize the dynamics that result from cultural differences.
6. Recognize and be sensitive to the diverse languages and dialects used by different communities.
7. Develop, support, and adapt services that meet culturally unique needs of the population being served.
8. Support services that develop leadership within the community so as to strengthen the capacity of the communities being served.
9. Actively recruit, hire, and train individuals at all levels that reflect the community being served.
10. Actively recruit and train a Board of Directors that reflect the community being served.
11. Support inter-agency cooperation and partnerships among grass roots organizations serving similar communities to enhance services.
12. Recognize and celebrate successes within the community being served.
13. Be accountable for addressing the complexity of the culture, and question and challenge cultural stereotypes.

### ***Agency Specific Principles***

1. Make time for clients and make them feel welcome so that they may advocate on their own behalf. Services shall be developed to address clients' specific needs as they have defined them.
2. Understanding and address the needs of the various subcultures within the communities being served.
3. Build trusting client/provider relationships that respond to and are sensitive to the client's culture.
4. Solicit, acknowledge, and support clients' own definitions of who they are and what they believe in. Refrain from categorizing them into pre-defined, inappropriate, and/or restricting categories.
5. Describe and deliver service which makes sense from a multi-cultural view.
6. Staff at all levels (paid and volunteer) which reflect bilingual and bicultural people who represent the cultures of the communities they serve.
7. Continually train staff at all levels (paid and volunteer) about the cultures of the communities served by the organization, and how best to serve their needs.
8. Recognize that organizational cultural competency requires training in cultural competence of staff, volunteers, and board. This will enable the organization to understand and meet the needs of the communities being served.
9. Create mechanisms to obtain the same knowledge of existing community resources in order to make appropriate referrals, and link individual clients with other providers who can address their needs.
10. Incorporate ongoing needs assessments with communities being served into the organization's policies, resource allocation, program design and implementation practices.
11. Create and commit to an ongoing internal process to monitor the organization's level of cultural competence, including recognizing achievements, and identifying and addressing specific areas for improvement.
12. Evaluate the effectiveness of the program to improve the well-being of the communities being served, and incorporate that feedback into revised program

models and practices.