

Best Practices

Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency

Culture is a Predominant Force

Acknowledge culture as a predominant force in shaping behaviors, values, and institutions. Although you may be inclined to take offense at the behaviors that differ from yours, remind yourself that it may not be personal; it may be cultural.

People are Served in Varying Degrees by the Dominant Culture

What works well in organizations and in the community for you and others who are like you may work against members of other cultural groups. Failure to make such an acknowledgement puts the burden for change on one group.

Group Identity is as Important as Their Individual Identities Are

Although it is important to treat all people as individuals, it is also important to acknowledge the group identity of individuals. Actions must be taken with the awareness that the dignity of a person is not guaranteed unless the dignity of his or her people is also preserved.

Diversity Within Cultures is Vast and Significant

Since diversity within cultures is as important as diversity between cultures, it is important to learn about cultural groups not as monoliths (for example, Asians, Hispanics, gay men, and women), but as the complex and diverse groups that they are. Often, because of the class differences in the United States, there will be more in common across cultural lines than within them.

Each Group Has Unique Cultural Needs

Each cultural group has unique needs that cannot be met within the boundaries of the dominant culture. Expressions of one group's cultural identity do not imply disrespect for yours. Make room in your organization for several paths that lead to the same goal.