

Learning Objective #4: Describe approaches, principles and strategies for developing cultural competence in assisting disaster survivors from cultural and diverse groups.

Approaches for Delivering Culturally Competent Disaster Intervention Services

In order to deliver effective disaster response and recovery interventions, it is recommended that responders and organizations practice cultural competence by responding specifically and sensitively to the various cultural groups affected by a disaster. This may be accomplished through:

- Confronting biases and stereotypes.
- Becoming aware of diverse worldviews.
- Developing culturally relevant intervention skills and strategies.
- Working to change organizational policies and practices that are oppressive.
- Viewing each family or individual receiving disaster services within the context of their cultural/ethnic/racial group and their experience of being a part of that group.
- Being committed to learning about cultural differences.
- Being flexible, creative and respectful in intervention and outreach approaches.

Principles for Developing and Delivering Culturally Competent Disaster Response and Recovery Interventions

Multicultural and Diversity Principles (Source: Baggerly, 2003)

Three multicultural and diversity principles provide guidelines for effectively intervening with survivors from any cultural group. These A-B-C principles are as follows:

Activate Cultural Sensitivity Always. Multicultural sensitivity should be continually developed as part of a lifestyle, rather than starting when offering interventions to persons of color or of a diverse group. Multicultural sensitivity and skills can be developed by anyone of any race, ethnic or diverse group. Being a participant observer and a cultural learner by observing, befriending, and openly talking with people of diverse groups throughout one's daily life is essential. Activating cultural sensitivity will be far more effective in disaster response events if one has exercised it throughout the years.

Bifocal View: General and Unique Characteristics. Viewing people as both a member of a particular group that has general characteristics, and as a unique individual with unique responses is essential. Awareness of between group differences helps distinguish characteristics of one group from another group. For example, African Americans, in general, tend to be more expressive in public. Asian Americans, in general, tend to be more reserved. These general characteristics should be open to challenge and change. Awareness of within group differences helps distinguish how a unique individual differs from the general characteristics of the group. For example, Kim, an Asian American female, may be quite expressive in public.

Communicate Caring Intention. Most people are very open and forgiving if they believe that someone is genuinely intending to express care. Inevitably, a cultural mistake will be made. However, if one overtly communicates caring intention, people are less likely to be offended. Caring intention is best communicated by the core conditions, identified by Carl Rogers (1951), as genuineness, empathy, and unconditional positive regard. Overtly stating, "I really want to help. I know that we are different, so please let me know if I do something that is not okay with you," will increase people's confidence in one's care.

Strategies for Developing Individual Cultural Competence

Strategies to operationalize multicultural competencies and fulfill professional responsibilities have been suggested by Arrendondo (1999), Arrendondo, et al. (1996) and Sue, Arrendondo & McDavis (1992). They emphasize strategy development in the areas of:

- **Attitudes:** Awareness of one's own assumptions, values, and biases.
- **Knowledge:** Understanding the worldview of culturally different people.
- **Skills:** Developing appropriate intervention strategies.

Multicultural Competency Development Strategies:

1. Strategies for Self-Awareness
 - Identify values and behaviors that reflect one's own cultural beliefs and attitudes.
 - Talk with family of origin about unique values and behaviors.
 - Assess one's own worldview.
2. Strategies for Understanding Worldview of Culturally Different
 - Read, attend cultural events, and ask questions to gain understanding.
 - Investigate how one's own emotional reactions affect people who are culturally different.
 - Consider how powerlessness and poverty affect cultural groups.
3. Strategies for Developing Appropriate Interventions
 - Assess barriers that prevent minorities from obtaining information and resources.
 - Develop a working relationship with cultural informants.
 - Interact with a variety of people and assess their responses.

Multicultural Competencies: A Conceptual Framework
(Adapted and adopted from Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1993)

1. Awareness of Own Cultural Values and Biases:

A. Attitudes and Beliefs

- Aware and sensitive to his/her own cultural heritage and to valuing and respecting differences.
- Awareness of how one's own cultural background, experiences, attitudes, values and biases influence psychological processes.
- Recognizes the limits of one's competencies and expertise.
- Comfortable with differences that exist between oneself and disaster survivors in terms of race, ethnicity, culture and beliefs.

B. Knowledge

- Holds specific knowledge about one's own racial and cultural heritage and how it personally and professionally affects one's definitions of normality/abnormality and the process of offering disaster services.
- Possesses knowledge and understanding about how oppression, racism, discrimination and stereotyping affect one personally and in one's work. This allows one to acknowledge one's own racist attitudes, beliefs and feelings.
- Possesses knowledge about one's social impact upon others.
- Knowledgeable about communication style differences, how one's styles may clash or facilitate the recovery process with minority disaster survivors, and how to anticipate the impact it may have upon others.

C. Skills

- Seeks out educational, consultative, and training experiences to enhance one's understanding and effectiveness in working with culturally different populations. Being able to recognize the limits of one's competence, one seeks consultation, seeks further training or education, and/or refers to more qualified individuals or resources.
- Strives to understand oneself as a racial and cultural being, and actively seeks a non-racist identity.

1. Awareness of Survivor's World View:

A. Attitudes and Beliefs

- Awareness of one's negative emotional reactions toward other racial and ethnic groups, which may prove harmful to disaster survivors. Willingness to contrast one's own beliefs and attitudes with those of culturally-different survivors in a non-judgmental fashion.
- Awareness of one's stereotypes and preconceived notions, which they may hold toward other racial and ethnic minority groups.

B. Knowledge

- Possesses specific knowledge and information about the particular group s/he is assisting. Aware of the life experiences, cultural heritage, and the historical background of the culturally different. This particular competency is strongly linked to the “minority identity development models” available in the literature.
- Understands how race, culture, and ethnicity may affect personality formations, vocational choices, manifestations of psychological disorders, help-seeking behavior, and the appropriateness/inappropriateness of disaster interventions.
- Understands and is knowledgeable about sociopolitical influences that impinge upon the life of racial and ethnic minorities. Immigration issues, poverty, racism, stereotyping, and powerlessness all leave scars, which may influence the recovery process.

C. Skills

- Is familiar with relevant research and the latest findings regarding disaster mental health and mental disorders of ethnic and racial groups. One actively seeks out educational experiences, which enhance one’s knowledge, understanding, and cross-cultural skills.
- Becomes actively involved with diverse individuals outside the disaster response setting (community events, socio-political functions, celebrations, friendships, neighborhood groups, etc.), so that one’s perspective of culturally different individuals is more than a training exercise.

2. Culturally Appropriate Intervention Strategies:

A. Attitudes and Beliefs

- Respects survivors’ religious and/or spiritual beliefs and values, including attributions and taboos, since they affect one’s worldview, psychological functioning, and expressions of distress.
- Respects indigenous helping practices and respects diverse community intrinsic help-giving networks.
- Values bilingualism and does not view other languages as an obstacle to helping.

B. Knowledge

- Possesses clear and explicit knowledge and understanding of the generic characteristics of counseling/therapy (culture-bound, class-bound and monolingual) and how they may clash with the cultural values of various minority and diverse groups.
- Aware of institutional barriers that prevent minorities from using mental health services.
- Possesses knowledge of culturally diverse family structures, hierarchies, values and beliefs, as well as community characteristics and resources.
- Aware of relevant discriminatory practices that affect the population being served.

C. Skills

- Offers verbal and nonverbal help.
- Uses more than one approach or method of communication.
- Recognizes that helping styles may be culturally bound.
- Recognizes the limitations of one's own helping style.
- Employs institutional help.
- Identifies problems arising from racism and other biases.
- Seeks help from traditional healers and spiritual leaders, as appropriate.

