



Cultural Competence in Daily Support

After completing this lesson you will be able to:

- 🌐 Describe methods of adjusting services to create more culturally competent supports.
- 🌐 Describe methods for identifying the cultures of people receiving supports.
- 🌐 Identify methods of learning more about specific cultures.



Methods of Designing and Delivering Culturally Competent Services

The service culture includes a series of activities. They are designed to identify needs. They are also designed to find and provide necessary supports. There are usually three important stages:

- ④ Assessment of Need
- ④ Planing and Organizational Supports
- ④ Implementing Plans

Assessments Need to Consider Culture

Misunderstandings regarding the purpose and style of assessment are common. Poor assessments can mean that people do not receive the services they need. It can also mean that people are assessed inaccurately. Here is an example. Listen to the Hear Story on screen 6 in Lesson 6. After listening to the voice clip, answer the questions below.

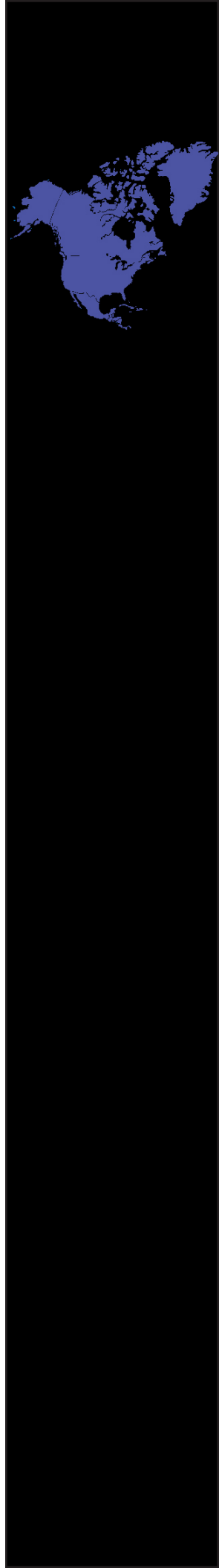
Questions:

1) This family was described as “cold and lacking in positive discipline strategies” for their son with disabilities. How did a difference in culture play a role in this misunderstanding? Describe this briefly

2) What could have been done differently to make this assessment more culturally competent? List your ideas.

Methods of Designing and Delivering Culturally Competent Services

When planning to complete an assessment it is important to review the assessment with a new lens. Look at the assessment with thought given to diverse values, beliefs, and experiences. Assessing a child regarding his or her ability to use a fork is only meaningful if the child is expected



to use a fork. In some cultures, children use chopsticks or eat with their hands. If this is so, then the assessment needs to be reviewed and adjusted with these things in mind.

Review each part of the assessment through the lens of cultural competence.

1) What is being assessed? Is it culturally meaningful to the person being assessed? If not, how can the assessments be adjusted? Are there alternative areas that can be assessed that will provide a more accurate picture? For example, you may choose to assess a child's ability to use the chopsticks rather than a fork when looking for age-appropriate development.

2) How is it being assessed? Are the methods culturally appropriate? What adjustments to the format need to be made to ensure the outcomes are accurate? For example, will you have to spend more time and gather information in indirect ways? Are the tools being used meaningful to the person? For example, if using a picture or symbols to assess understanding, do the people in the pictures look like the person being assessed? Are they participating in familiar activities? Do they represent culturally acceptable behavior?

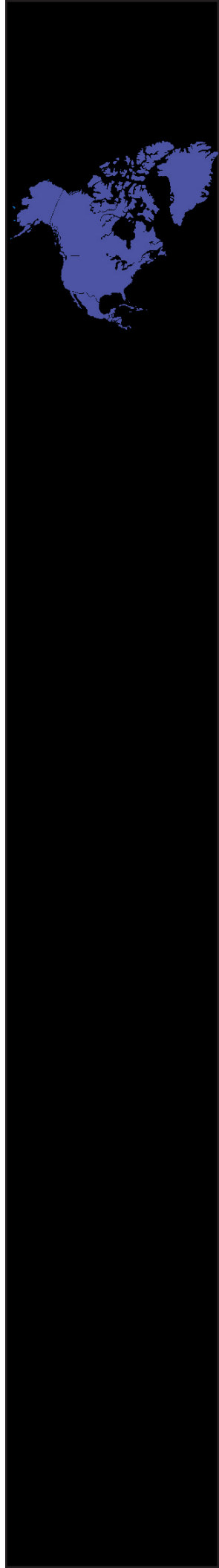


Once the person's needs have been assessed, it is important that whatever supports are needed reflect the culture of the person. It is important to think about obvious signs of culture such as what and when a person eats. It is also important to think about less obvious signs of culture, such as the person's values and beliefs. When thinking about support plans, reflect on the following:

1) Are stated goals of the service plan culturally appropriate? Do they reflect the person's culture or the service culture? Are the goals meaningful to the person?

2) Are supports organized in a culturally appropriate way? Do people receive services from whom they want? Do they receive them when they want? Are the available tools and items culturally appropriate? Are the values of the person receiving supports the basis for decision-making?

3) What cultural resources are used to create a meaningful support situation? For example, how are community centers, religious and spiritual centers, family members, friends, and neighbors included? Do they share in the planning when appropriate? Are they a central part of the person's supports?



Read the scenarios below. Review the questions for each scenario and record your responses below.

Scenario # 1

Sherri works for Bill, a man with physical disabilities who uses a wheelchair. He hired her to help him with such tasks as getting dressed, cooking, and basic household chores. She does most of the cooking and grocery shopping. One day she rearranged the kitchen so that she didn't have to bend over so often to get items from the lowest shelves. The next day when she came to work, Bill was furious. She almost lost her job.

Questions for Scenario # 1

- 1) What did Sherri do wrong?
- 2) What should she have done differently?
- 3) How did her behavior reflect biases and assumptions?

Scenario #2

Judi is a young woman with slight cerebral palsy and a mild cognitive disability. She lives in her own apartment, but receives intermittent supports from Direct Support Professionals from a local provider agency. Judi's best friend is Mandi. They spend a lot of time together. Sometimes they hold hands or watch TV with their arms around each other. When James is assigned to help Judi in her apartment, he tells Judi and Mandi to "break it up." He tells Judi that holding hands with another woman is wrong.

Questions for Scenario # 2

- 1) What did James do wrong?
- 2) What could he have done differently?



3) How did his behavior reflect biases and assumptions?

Becoming culturally competent includes learning about other cultures. It also includes changing your behavior to meet the needs of the person receiving services. By not assuming that everyone has the same culture, you can become better at recognizing the cultural norms of the services you provide. By recognizing them, you can share the values, beliefs and context of the service being provided, and negotiate something that works for both the person and the services system. To see and hear one direct support professional's attempt at this, watch the video on page 10 of Lesson 6. After viewing the video, respond to the questions below.

Questions:

1) In what ways did this direct support professional explain and clarify how services are provided? Was this clarification helpful or not?

2) In what ways did this direct support professional accommodate to the culture of the person? Were the accommodations reasonable? Why, or why not?

3) Could the DSP have done more? If so what?



Identifying Culture

In order to provide culturally competent supports you must understand the cultural norms of the person you are supporting. This is not an easy task. As you have learned, many aspects of culture are completely invisible. Because people affiliate at different levels with their own culture and have different experiences, you need to dialogue with the person you support about their culture and its importance in the person's life.

To discover a person's culture, it is best to use both direct and indirect methods. This will usually lead to a more comprehensive understanding than using only one or the other.

These methods can include:

- 🌐 Direct and indirect questions regarding supports needs. (Do not assume affiliation with specific cultures, including the Macro culture).
- 🌐 Observation of the person and his or her choices and interactions.
- 🌐 Learning more about cultural differences in general.
- 🌐 Learning more about specific groups with whom the person does affiliate.
- 🌐 Reviewing documents (e.g., background, social and family history, etc.) that will provide pertinent and helpful information.
- 🌐 Speaking with family members, relatives, and close friends.

Support agencies, or independently employed Direct Support Professionals, often have standard times when they seek information from a person desiring supports. They may use standardized forms and questions to gather this information. Some of these forms include:

- 🌐 Intake forms.
- 🌐 Assessments.
- 🌐 Interest inventories.
- 🌐 Personal histories.
- 🌐 Family background studies
- 🌐 Planning documents.
- 🌐 Individual Planning documents from previous providers.

Figuring out a person's culture is not always straightforward. Often, you cannot simply ask. For example, in your role as a direct support professional, directly asking people about their affiliation to their race or their sexual orientation would often be inappropriate. Even if it is appropriate to ask the question, the person's direct response may not be very helpful. This may happen because of communication barriers. It may happen because of other barriers in understanding or simply because the person may not feel comfortable with you. On the other hand, making assumptions is not an effective or healthy approach.

The indirect method of observation

Using observation or reflection is a method to indirectly identify a person's culture. Try observing the following:

- 🌐 When does this person seem to get annoyed, angry, excited, or happy? How do you know the person is feeling this way? When are times that the person reacts differently than you would expect?
- 🌐 What routines does this person participate in without being asked by others?
- 🌐 How does this person greet and interact with people from his or her family?
- 🌐 How does this person greet and interact with his or her friends?
- 🌐 Does this person's behavior or demeanor change in different environments? How does it change?
- 🌐 Who are the most important people in this person's life? How do you know?
- 🌐 What foods does this person really seem to enjoy? What foods does the person avoid?
- 🌐 When does this person seem most content?
- 🌐 When, if ever, does this person do things or say things that don't make sense to you?
- 🌐 Where are there points of conflict between this person and the service culture? What things does the person typically "refuse" to do, or habitually "forget?"

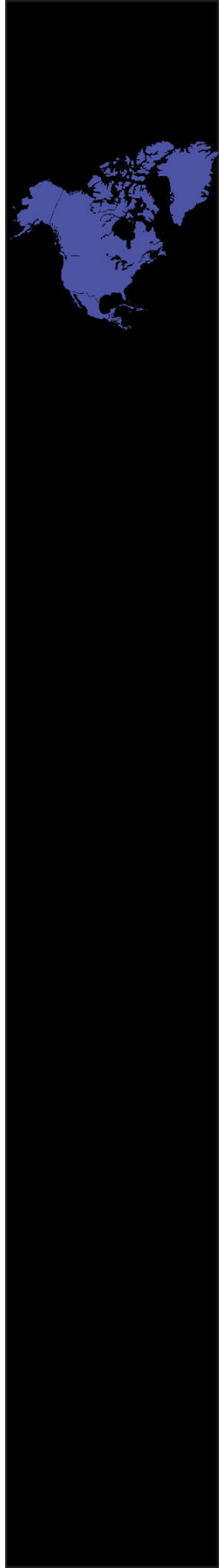
Other Less Direct Methods

These are some less direct methods of learning about the culture of someone you support. You can learn about the person and what is important to him or her by...

- 🌐 Visiting without any other agenda.
- 🌐 Sharing food, drink, or unexpected assistance (such as a ride somewhere).
- 🌐 Telling stories that reflect values or beliefs.
- 🌐 Being quiet together while performing tasks.
- 🌐 Stepping back from your "professional" role and allowing the person to set the tone of a conversation or the pace of an activity.

Broaden Your Cultural Horizons

There is no limit to different things you can do to broaden your perspective. Try some of the following. By trying new things you will have more experiences. These experiences will help you be more aware of potential differences. They may help you understand when a conflict has cultural roots. They may help you plan pro-actively for providing culturally competent supports.



- 🌐 Take a class that teaches about cooking food different from what you are used to.
- 🌐 Go to a play that is written, produced, and acted by a cultural group you are not familiar with.
- 🌐 Listen to a different type of music.
- 🌐 Watch a foreign or alternative movie.
- 🌐 Read a book by a person who has a different culture from you.
- 🌐 Surf the web and learn about people from different parts of the world.
- 🌐 Learn a new language.
- 🌐 Go to a drag show. Sit in the front row.
- 🌐 Ask a friend to share more about his or her religion.
- 🌐 Join an ethnic dance group.
- 🌐 Attend ethnic festivals. Eat the food!
- 🌐 Read travel guides and go!

Learning About Specific Cultures

When you work actively with a person who is part of a culture that is different from your own, you will need to learn about that specific culture. You will need to develop resources in order to customize supports. Many communities that are outside the macro culture have community resources to support their members. There are groups to support new immigrants. There are groups to support people who are gay or lesbian. There are groups to support people with disabilities.

In order to best support someone from a culture that is unfamiliar to you, you will need to develop a set of resources. The following places, people, and things, are good resources you can cultivate.

- 🌐 The person you support and his or her family and friends.
- 🌐 Cultural centers, community centers, and support groups.
- 🌐 Cultural guides.
- 🌐 Traditional resources such as books, workbooks, tapes, videos, articles, informational pamphlets, and web sites.

Cultural Guides

A good cultural guide:

- 🌐 Understands and can navigate within your culture.
- 🌐 Understands and is part of the culture you are trying to reach.
- 🌐 Is respected and trusted by members of the culture you are trying to reach.
- 🌐 Sees value in helping you to understand the culture you are trying to reach.
- 🌐 Is culturally competent. Does not assume others from his or her culture all think and act the same.

Cultural Competence in Daily Support

Cultural competence in daily support is not easy. However, it is part of the new way in which services are being provided. Part of being a direct support professional is helping people live better lives. Every part of life, from the foods we eat, to the way we make decisions, stems from our culture. It is important for direct support professionals to become more knowledgeable about how to meet the diverse needs of the persons you support.

In the lesson titled, “What is Cultural Competence”, you were asked to respond to the questions below. We would like you to answer them again in your journal or on the note pad, this time from your perspective today. When you are done, compare the two sets of responses.

Questions:

- 1) Think about learning about culture, beliefs, customs, and values. What benefits do you see to this type of learning? Write down 2-3 personal benefits to this type of learning, from your view.
- 2) What concerns do you have about the content of this course, if any? Write down 2-3 concerns you have about the content of this course.
- 3) Compare your responses now to the first time you responded during Lesson 1. Have your responses changed? If so, in what ways.
- 4) How do you plan to address your concerns? List some ways.

