

PRACTICING CULTURAL RELEVANCE



The Core Team engages in the lifelong process of:

1. Acquiring an understanding of how values, beliefs, attitudes, and traditions of an individual's multiple cultural identities (such as racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, gender identity, economic, social, educational status, and other affiliate groups) contribute to one's own and others' culture;
2. Learning about personal circumstances, conditions, and experiences that influence one's own and other people's thinking, behaviors, and roles in their community;
3. Acknowledging the power and privilege differences and similarities between and among groups of people; and
4. Using this knowledge to work effectively with all people.

Please see the following matrices for additional information related to practicing cultural relevance:

- Engaging Youth and Family
- Conducting a Comprehensive Collaborative Assessment
- Collaborative Treatment Planning and Care Coordination
- Assessing Risk, Safety Planning, and Supporting Families through Crisis
- Incorporating Psychiatry and Occupational Therapy Consultation
- Providing Therapeutic Interventions
- Continuity with Higher Levels of Care
- Supporting Life Transitions
- Bridging Community Integration
- Strengthening Wellbeing through Respite

IDEAL PRACTICE

DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE

UNSATISFACTORY PRACTICE

CONDUCTING CULTURAL SELF-ASSESSMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTINUUM WORK

- » Prior to working with each youth and family, takes an inventory of one's own values, beliefs, attitudes, biases, knowledge, and awareness relative to the youth and family being served.
- » Routinely conducts a self-assessment of one's own privilege status (and its potential impact) in relation to the family and youth's status in multiple dimensions (such as gender, race, ethnicity, economic status, and social status). This includes reflection on one's personal family history, experiences and circumstances and how these might affect biases or judgments about the family and youth's family situation, relationships, or preferred permanency outcome.
- » Takes responsibility for one's own continued growth in their education and comprehension of multiple cultural identities with whom one works.
- » Explores cultural differences among Continuum team members (Continuum clinician, outreach worker, peer mentor, supervisor). Engages in ongoing dialogue with one another and in supervision regarding one's own values, beliefs, attitudes, biases and potential implicit biases, and their impact on work with youth/family.

- » Engages in this step at start of services but not on an ongoing basis.
- » Adheres to a limited or simplistic definition of culture.
- » Touches on obvious differences and similarities but not all dimensions.
- » Inventories own culture but without growth; not sure what to do and doesn't seek help.
- » Acknowledges some biases but does not recognize one's implicit bias.
- » Brings up cultural biases and other concerns but doesn't recognize transference or counter transference in supervision.
- » Relies on existing knowledge of culture, ethnicity, and other diverse groups but doesn't further explore or extend knowledge.

- » Doesn't engage in self-assessment or inventory.
- » Makes no effort to grow in the area of cultural competence.
- » Denies privileged status.
- » Ignores or denies cultural differences/similarities among team members.
- » Assumes family is responsible for explaining cultural considerations.
- » Assumes that if family doesn't mention any issues related to culture, then there aren't any.
- » Imposes one's own beliefs, assumptions, and expectations of how team members or others should express their gender, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. Assumes gender, race, socioeconomic status, etc., based on appearances.

IDEAL PRACTICE**DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE****UNSATISFACTORY PRACTICE****DISCOVERING YOUTH'S/FAMILY'S CULTURE**

- » Creates “safe space” and pacing in which to explore. Explains that exploring and discovering youth's/family's culture can help the Core Team avoid engaging in a way that doesn't consider their culture.
- » In order to ensure culturally-relevant interventions and to respect family boundaries, engages in ongoing discussion with youth/family members about their unique values, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and life experiences within the larger racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic, immigrant/refugee, or other groups with which they identify or feel an affiliation. Explores individual family culture as another layer of diversity and honors the wide variance of parenting that is safe and supportive to youth well-being.
- » Explores with curiosity what youth's and family's affiliations/identities mean to the youth and family.

- » Acknowledges youth's self-identification of gender but doesn't recognize the fluidity of gender identity.
- » Gathers information but is not always attuned to the youth's/family's comfort level in sharing this type of information.
- » Gathers information in a planful manner but does not take advantage of information about the youth's/family's culture that arises spontaneously.
- » Engages in discussion at intake but with limited or no follow-up.
- » Superficial or limited exploration of impact of culture.
- » Asks pointed questions rather than exploring or inviting information.

- » Persists in gathering information without considering the family's boundaries or their emotional responses when discussing issues of cultural identity.
- » Ask questions about family members' culture that bear no relevance to treatment but instead is based on own personal curiosity.
- » Assumes without discussion.
- » Attempts to homogenize family culture without acknowledging individual differences.
- » Assumes family is “just like me” based on shared generic categories (e.g., same race, socioeconomic status, etc.)
- » Assumes experiences of culture are the same for all family members.

IDEAL PRACTICE**DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE****UNSATISFACTORY PRACTICE****DISCOVERING YOUTH'S/FAMILY'S CULTURE**

- » Engages in ongoing discussion with youth and individual family members to discover differences and similarities among family members and between generations. Explores roles and privilege differentials within family (e.g., sons allowed to stay out later than daughters, fathers are disciplinarians, mothers cooks for everyone). Acknowledges youth's values/beliefs that are different from or conflicting with their families.
- » Acknowledges the wide range of safe and "good enough" parenting strengths, styles, techniques, and strategies as well as a similarly wide range of youth responses to, acceptance of, and benefits from his/her parenting.

During initial and ongoing discussion, explores youth/family member beliefs regarding physical health, mental health, behavioral and emotional responses, substance use, and treatment.

- » Discusses only with youth or parent/caregiver without bringing views together with whole family.
- » Gathers general cultural information (race, language) without exploring what is unique to this family (values, attitudes) or has limited views of what culture can be.
- » Engages in conversation but does not incorporate into treatment.
- » Only acknowledges or considers a rigidly restricted set of parenting styles to be "good enough."
- » Only acknowledges or considers a rigidly restricted set of youth responses to be acceptable.
- » Engages in limited or superficial discussions about youth's and family's beliefs regarding physical health, mental health, behavioral and emotional responses, substance use, and treatment.
- » Explores beliefs but only as problems or points of contention, not as strengths.

- » Takes sides in treatment based on generational or other differences.
- » Assumes race, ethnicity, religion, or other identity based on superficial data without discussion.
- » Assumes family has "no culture" and/or culture has no role in Continuum work without explanation.
- » Places burden on family to bring up and share cultural considerations.
- » Imposes own family's parenting and youth response styles as the expectation for youth/family.
- » Makes assumptions about youth's/family's beliefs without discussion.
- » Disregards beliefs, imposes own cultural values, or tries to convince family to comply with presumed standards without regard to their culture.

IDEAL PRACTICE**DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE****UNSATISFACTORY PRACTICE****DISCOVERING YOUTH'S/FAMILY'S CULTURE**

- » Explores the resilience and vulnerabilities that emerge from the youth/family members' culture and experiences.
- » Engages in initial and ongoing discussion specifically about strengths—including individual, family, and community strengths—related to youth and family culture.
- » Helps youth/family to recognize and explore strengths; shares/reflects on youth's/family's potential strengths even when youth/family are not initially aware of them.

- » Engages in discussion at intake but with limited or no follow-up.
- » Engages in superficial discussion of strengths (e.g., lists activities/generalizations about strengths).
- » Bases ideas of strengths on a narrow definition of culture or what is acceptable as a strength (e.g., mother should speak up; father should help with child care).
- » Explores with only youth or only parent/caregiver.
- » Over-identifies with one member's role in the family.
- » Mistakes strengths (e.g., family roles, beliefs about mental health) for concerns.

- » Emphasizes own perspective over the family's perspective.
- » Does not consider the emotional weight and impact that a discussion about vulnerability and resilience may have on the family.
- » Discusses problems only, with minimal or no discussion of strengths.
- » Assumes strengths based on stereotypes (e.g., "all Black people go to church," so church community is a strength).
- » No conversation linking strengths to culture; interpreting strengths based on own culture.
- » Disrespects others' cultural practices.

IDEAL PRACTICE**DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE****UNSATISFACTORY PRACTICE****DISCOVERING THE CULTURE OF YOUTH'S/FAMILY'S COMMUNITY**

- » Acknowledges and explores, initially and on an ongoing basis, the neighborhood/community environment of the youth and family. Explores how family identifies/doesn't identify with the culture of the community in which they live.
- » Explores available resources, community crime rates, socio-economic conditions, and racial tensions at school and the impact they have on behavior, symptoms, and diagnoses.
- » Explores the impact and specific needs of youth who have experienced immigration-related and/or other separations from community or family (such as homelessness, kinship, foster home and long term residential placements, and adoption).

- » Considers only some family members' safety.
- » Limits exploration to geographical community and does not explore other communities that the youth or family belong to.
- » Engages in discussion at intake but limited or no follow-up.
- » Superficial or partial discussion of the impact of community factors or immigration-related disruption on attachment.
- » Confuses practitioner's sense of discomfort in a neighborhood with youth/family being unsafe.
- » Minimizes the positive or negative impact of community/neighborhood.

- » Does not explore community resources beyond those that are already known to the family or provider. Omits natural supports from discussion about community resources.
- » Does not consider youth's and family's positive connections to the community, even when others consider it unsafe.
- » Gives no consideration to community context.
- » Pathologizes behavior (as "oppositional" or "conduct disordered") without considering the impact of community factors.
- » Talks about community with stereotypical or negative descriptions (e.g., "bad neighborhood," "ghetto," "soccer-mom lifestyle").

IDEAL PRACTICE**DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE****UNSATISFACTORY PRACTICE****PREVENTING AND RESOLVING CULTURAL BARRIERS/MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN YOUTH/FAMILY AND CORE TEAM**

- » Asks about youth and family members' preferred language for spoken, sign, and/or written communication at intake. Offers options for ensuring effective communication across language/literacy differences.
- » Considers Core Team's cultural fit with family preferences for fit.
- » Recognizes and acts on any practical concerns about meeting times and locations that relate to culture (holy days, family privacy boundaries, concern about stigma).

Inquires with youth/family about experiences with how formal and informal supports and others have interacted with, understood, and/or misunderstood their cultural identity.

- » Assumes language and/or literacy needs without discussion.
- » Adapts to youth/family needs but communicates that the flexibility is a burden.
- » Uses interpreter for sessions, meetings, and phone conversations but doesn't troubleshoot providing family with documents in their preferred language.

- » Engages in discussion at intake with limited or no follow up discussions. Discusses with only a subset of family.
- » Discusses superficially or limits discussion to one-dimension (e.g., only discusses religion).
- » Tries to discuss but stops if topics are uncomfortable.

- » Explains available options for working in preferred language but does not follow through.
- » Fails to offer options or explore ways to address language/communication needs.
- » Uses youth or family member as interpreter.
- » Disregards needs and concerns that are based on culture.
- » Minimizes/disregards family's cultural/religious practices when scheduling meetings.

- » Focuses on ways youth/family have misunderstood other's culture not on how they have been misunderstood.
- » Labels family as resistant to discussing past culture misunderstandings. Does not consider possibility that family members may be limiting what they share due to confusion, conflict, shame, embarrassment, etc.

IDEAL PRACTICE**DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE****UNSATISFACTORY PRACTICE****PREVENTING AND RESOLVING CULTURAL BARRIERS/MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN YOUTH/FAMILY AND CORE TEAM**

- » Routinely checks in with family/youth around relevance of Core Team's approach to youth's/family's cultural identity needs and concerns. Encourages youth and family to inform Core Team of their experiences of cultural bias or misunderstanding by the Core Team. Promptly acknowledges, apologizes for, and corrects one's own actions and engages in repair work.
- » Assesses whether one's own cultural self disclosure meets youth/family clinical needs and only self discloses based on those needs.
- » Acknowledges and opens discussion of differences and similarities in culture and in power and privilege. Reflects actively with youth/family on how these affect dynamics of working with individuals/families.
- » Uses therapeutic alliance and adjusts practice approaches to bridge gap between culturally influenced perspectives of youth/family and Core Team.
- » Identifies the need for and obtains culturally relevant consultation and supervision around counter transference.

- » Opens discussion without establishing a safe environment.
- » Engages in limited or superficial discussions. Discusses at intake but not throughout.
- » Explores beliefs but only as problems or points of contention, not as strengths.
- » Discusses family beliefs without sharing practitioner's own beliefs (when appropriate) and/or finding common ground.
- » Acknowledges one's own mistakes late.
- » Acknowledges mistakes but doesn't know what to do next; fails to ask for family's input around what Core Team could do differently to avoid similar mistakes in the future.
- » Makes/expresses overgeneralizations that one can relate to family based on similarities with the youth/family.

- » Disregards beliefs, imposes own cultural values, and/or tries to convince family to comply with "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts" without regard to their culture.
- » Insists that a family must address team's mistakes even when the family does not want to.
- » Sees problems but says nothing.
- » Joins in negativity expressed by team members.
- » Blames someone else, e.g., "I'm sorry but my supervisor made me do it" or "You're too sensitive."
- » Assumes the need to check in with youth/family from some races/backgrounds and not others.
- » Overly apologetic such that family feels sorry for practitioner.
- » Apologetic without acknowledging ownership. (e.g., "I'm sorry you feel that way.")

IDEAL PRACTICE**DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE****UNSATISFACTORY PRACTICE****SUPPORTING RESOLUTION OF CULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDING WITH FAMILY TEAM AND OTHER SUPPORTS/ENTITIES**

- » Invites and supports family to discuss and address behaviors by team members that result from misunderstanding of culture. Supports family in addressing teamwork concerns.
- » Offers options for facilitating discussion between youth/family members and other external team members regarding youth- and family-preferred cultural considerations that may impact teamwork and decisions about culturally-specific interventions. Facilitates joint conversations between team members and youth/family in order to clarify any misinformation or misunderstandings related to the youth's/family's unique permanency strengths or situation. Acts as an advocate in helping team members understand the youth's/family's unique permanency strengths or situation.
- » Addresses directly and respectfully with other team members and youth/family when observing actions that appear insensitive to youth/family culture or experience.

- » Engages in partial or superficial discussion with team.
- » Brings up discussion with team without preparing family. Does not explore range of options for family communicating with team.
- » Fails to prepare youth/family for how misunderstandings will be addressed.
- » Suggests that family speak up about concerning behaviors but without offering effective support or coaching in how to do it.
- » Addresses behaviors indirectly or in "sugar-coated" or hostile manner.
- » Addresses behaviors with some team members but avoids confronting others.
- » Processes with youth/family observed misunderstandings after youth/family have indicated they don't want to talk about it.

- » Assumes without discussion.
- » Addresses "family culture" with team without including family.
- » Creates conflict in team due to manner of addressing problem, or by ignoring problem.
- » Replaces Core Team staff member without first facilitating discussion/process of repair work with youth/family.
- » Observes or is made aware of misunderstandings but doesn't address them.
- » Dismisses misunderstandings.
- » Blames another party/person for the need to address misunderstandings.

IDEAL PRACTICE**DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE****UNSATISFACTORY PRACTICE****SUPPORTING RESOLUTION OF CULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDING WITH FAMILY TEAM AND OTHER SUPPORTS/ENTITIES**

- » Recognizes that institutionalized and systemic cultural and linguistic barriers exist and may be experienced by youth/family. Supports empowerment, educates and models ways they can advocate for their needs (e.g., requesting a translator, family partner, etc.).
- » Collaborates/coordinates around ways to educate Family Team and/or other supports regarding institutionalized and systemic cultural circumstances that continue to impact the youth/family.

- » Respectfully informs/educates family on how cultural norms (e.g., discipline of children, expectations of women, etc.) may be in conflict with state laws and prevailing customs and how this could be problematic in some domains.
- » Explores family's current strategies and options (such as replacement behavior/ actions) to prevent/resolve potential conflict with U.S. laws and/or customs that could be problematic for the youth/ family.

- » Acknowledges barriers but doesn't take action to address barriers.
- » Follows dominant societal cultural norms without questioning how youth and family experience these.
- » Makes assumptions that people who speak the same language share the same beliefs.
- » Acknowledges barriers but lacks initiative to educate self or relies on youth/family to educate.
- » Only focuses on programmatic factors and not larger societal issues.

- » Discusses only the most obvious concerns or only in relation to DCF.
- » Over- or underemphasizes the impact of different practices.
- » Assumes family knows laws.
- » Files 51A without speaking with family first.

- » Ignores societal institutionalized linguistic cultural barriers and "isms."
- » Uses stereotypical language.
- » Assumes that prevailing norms and practices are the right and respectful way for all.
- » Ignores the possibility that institutions trying to help youth/family maybe inadvertently creating barriers based in prevailing cultural biases.
- » Upholds/maintains Family Team biases that are dismissive of youth/family cultural preferences.

- » Takes an authoritarian stance. Communicates that youth/family should adopt US customs regardless of own identity/customs.
- » Waits too long to talk with family.
- » Asks questions with a biased stereotypical or assuming slant. Asks question of some groups but not others.
- » Misinterprets laws/cultural norms.