

RECONNECT Program Manual
Addendum on Cultural Competency

1. Due to cultural values and/or limited resources, it is acceptable or even encouraged for many racial/ethnic minorities to have young adults live at home with families or with extended families. For example, American Indian young people on the reservation may live at home with family because of housing shortage and the lack of job opportunities.
2. 1st, 2nd, 3rd generation immigrants have different issues and life experiences. It is important to consider the degree of acculturation for parents and the young people when developing transition plans.
3. It is important to clarify terminology, e.g., immigrants, 1st/2nd/3rd generations.

In PASSAGES, following definitions are used:

1st generation = the immigrant; 2nd = children born in US to 1st generation immigrants

4. There are diversities within diversities. For example, not all American Indian tribes or Latinos have same culture.
5. Transitional Age
 - a. Transitional age carries cultural meaning. It is important to explore how cultural groups define transition and transitional age. Life experience, roles, and community expectations may be more important than chronological age. It is important to consider transition as a process – it is incremental and it takes time. However, American legal implications and definitions of "adult" have to be taken into account, even though the definition of "adult" may differ in individual cultures.
 - b. There may be different cultural expectations for transition-into-adulthood for males and females. For example, Hispanic females may live at home until married, at whatever age that may be. Hispanic males may be expected to be working at a young age to help support the family.
 - c. Transition age is rising for American Indians. It used to be when women went through puberty, usually at 13-15, and when men started hunting, also at 13-15. However, the transitional age now is more like 20-25.
 - d. For some racial/ethnic minorities, having siblings makes a difference in the transition. Younger siblings may be allowed to stay at home and "transition" to adulthood more slowly, while the older siblings are expected to help support the family or parent younger siblings.
 - e. Females may be nurtured longer to complete their education. Males may be more likely to be seen as adults as soon as they work to help support the family.

- f. It is important to consider resources available to the young people. For example, on reservation, many young people have limited opportunities to advance to "adulthood" due to scarcity of resources.

6. Stigma

"Mental health" is a western concept. Many cultural groups, including residents of rural communities, may not discuss mental health and don't have a word for it. It may be a taboo to discuss someone as having mental health challenges. The term "behavioral health" may be less stigmatizing. People may say that they "go see Kristy" rather than say "go see mental health specialist". Families with poor understanding of mental health issues may need a lot of support before they will accept the services without stigma.

7. Community Partners

It is important to include community partners when working on transitional issues. Community partners that are significant to racial/ethnic minorities may include suicide prevention task force, traditional healers, churches, sports league, youth groups, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act office, and domestic violence coalitions, etc.

Many racial/ethnic communities have community leaders (formal or informal) whom people go to for opinion and/or consultation. They are respected by the entire community and have influence over the family. These leaders can be great resources to mobilize community support for the young people and their families.

8. Family Development

Some families don't have a complete family structure or stability and may see extended family members as family or role models. Or, children and youth may be "street-smart" and raise themselves. There needs to be a different strategy for young people in these circumstances, compared to young people from intact families.

For many immigrant families, children and youth may have better command of English than their parents. This changes the power structure within the family. For families needing linguistic assistance, it is important to ask the family who they would like to interpret for them. Generally, we discourage using children as interpreters. In situations which families prefer to have children/youth interpret, providers should inform them of the potential drawbacks of using children as interpreters.

Each tribe has its own norms. For example, Navajo is a matrilineal society. Women are the decision-makers. It's also important to include clan members beyond the immediate family. Some Navajo families may have rules, which are often made by mothers, that Navajo be spoken at home, even if family members also speak English.

We also need to take into account differences in parenting style and disciplining practices. Families need to be taught how to support transitional age youth.

9. Youth Development

Many older youth are often caregivers for younger siblings. There should be activities for younger siblings during the time older youth meet. It is important to always keep recruiting and training youth leaders and advocates because of the turnover rate among young people.

Some cultural groups are disproportionately affected by health or social problems, e.g., teen pregnancy, STDs, or suicide. In these cases, it is important to incorporate the targeted health education or suicide prevention into the transition plan.

10. Social Marketing/Outreach

It is important to find the cultural venues which are frequented by racial/ethnic minorities, e.g., Mexican markets, flea markets, sporting events, rodeos. Newsletter and community newspapers can be effective tools to spread the words. We should also consider young people's preference of electronic media -- texting, TV, internet, *Facebook, Myspace, twitter, etc.*

It may be effective not to label the program as a "mental health" program. Instead, market it as something more interesting and relevant. When young people gathered, we can then introduce mental health topics.

Food is central to many gatherings and events for racial/ethnic minorities.

11. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important issue. Many minority communities are small and close knit, and people know each other well. Additionally, people may not understand the value and importance of confidentiality. Fear of loss of confidentiality may discourage people from seeking services. It is critical to have process in place to ensure confidentiality.

12. Crisis/Safety Planning

Some cultures (e.g., Navajo, Pacific Islander, and Chinese) may oppose to discussing worst-case scenarios like crisis or death. They may fear that talking about these cases will invite them to happen. It is important to reframe the crisis/safety planning in a culturally positive term, e.g., life planning.

13. Recommended Resources:

- a. Bennett Model of Cultural Competence.
- b. The Phoenix Alliance youth advocacy group.