

Oklahoma Healthy Transition Initiative Cultural Competency

To understand cultural competence, it is important to grasp the full meaning of the word culture first. According to Chamberlain (2005), culture represents “the values, norms, and traditions that affect how individuals of a particular group perceive, think, interact, behave, and make judgments about their world” (p. 197).

OHTI staff will receive CLC training using Diversity Training University International (DTUI) isolated four cognitive components: (a) Awareness, (b) Attitude, (c) Knowledge, and (d) Skills.

- **Awareness.** Awareness is consciousness of one's personal reactions to people who are different. A police officer who recognizes that he profiles people who look like they are from Mexico as “illegal aliens” has cultural awareness of his reactions to this group of people.
- **Attitude.** Paul Pedersen’s multicultural competence model emphasized three components: awareness, knowledge and skills. DTUI added the attitude component in order to emphasize the difference between training that increases awareness of cultural bias and beliefs in general and training that has participants carefully examine their own beliefs and values about cultural differences.
- **Knowledge.** Social science research indicates that our values and beliefs about equality may be inconsistent with our behaviors, and we ironically may be unaware of it. Social psychologist Patricia Devine and her colleagues, for example, showed in their research that many people who score low on a prejudice test tend to do things in cross cultural encounters that exemplify prejudice (e.g., using out-dated labels such as “illegal aliens”, “colored”, and “homosexual”). This makes the Knowledge component an important part of cultural competence development.

Regardless of whether our attitude towards cultural differences matches our behaviors, we can all benefit by improving our cross-cultural effectiveness. One common goal of diversity professionals is to create inclusive systems that allow members to work at maximum productivity levels.

- **Skills.** The Skills component focuses on practicing cultural competence to perfection. Communication is the fundamental tool by which people interact in organizations. This includes gestures and other non-verbal communication that tend to vary from culture to culture.