

# Organizational Competence

## Background

A growing body of research has documented that racial and ethnic disparities exist with regard to access to mental health services for Latino/Hispanic families, notably, low utilization rates for mental health services and significant problems with treatment recidivism. Aguilar-Gaxiola (2005) reported that 70% of Latinos who access mental health services do not return after their first visit. Other barriers to mental health service utilization include lack of knowledge of where to seek treatment, limited proximity to treatment centers, transportation problems, and a lack of Spanish speakers who are culturally and linguistically competent (Aguilar-Gaxiola, Zelezny, Garcia, Alejo-García, & Vega, 2002; Rios-Ellis, 2005; see the "Service Utilization and Case Management priority area for more information). Gaps in services are further complicated by issues such as poverty, level of acculturation, and trauma exposure (Bernal & Saez-Santiago, 2006). These startling demographic and logistical realities demonstrate the need for organizations to provide culturally and linguistically competent mental health services to Latino/Hispanic children and families who have experienced trauma.

In an effort to provide optimal trauma-informed mental health treatment to the more than 45 million Latinos/Hispanics residing in the US, special care must be taken to promote cultural and linguistic competence across service systems to ensure ethical and culturally effective care for clients. In order to eliminate the racial, ethnic, and other disparities in the quality of and access to services for Latino/Hispanic families, organizations must gather information on health-related beliefs, attitudes, practices, and communication patterns of clients and their families and use this knowledge to improve services, strengthen programs, and increase community participation. Organizations that promote culturally and linguistically competent practices through formal and informal policies may help increase the likelihood that Latino/Hispanic children and families affected by trauma will not only seek treatment but benefit from those services. Both individuals and organizations must be attuned to cultural differences and how they affect mental health and the mental health service experience, including engagement of Latino/Hispanic families. This document focuses on critical components (i.e., leadership, training and workforce development, financial and budgetary allocations, physical environment, governance and organizational infrastructure) that will assist organizations as they embark on the journey toward cultural and linguistic competence with Latino/Hispanic children and families who have experienced trauma.

**Leadership.** The goal of leadership within the context of culturally and

linguistically competent organizations is to cultivate, and sustain practices that infuse competence in all services. Thus, systemic integration of culturally competent concepts into key elements of leadership, such as mission and vision, is vital in reducing disparities and enhancing competence.



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**Training and Workforce Development.** Training and development activities that focus on cultural skills, knowledge, and attitudes will foster a shared understanding and acceptance of culturally and linguistically competent services and interventions. Moreover, an organization's efforts to recruit, train, and retain a culturally and linguistically representative workforce and to ensure that staff and other service providers have the requisite tools for delivering culturally competent services, including an understanding of the subtleties of the culture and language, is a critical part of this ongoing process towards competence.

**Financial and Budgetary Allocations.** The dedicated allocation of fiscal resources is critical to ensuring culturally and linguistically competent services. Other budgetary allocations could include: staff incentives for recruitment/retention, specialized training, outreach and engagement activities, translated materials, inter-

pretation services, stipends for family/youth trainers, sponsoring cultural events, food for gatherings, and strategic planning. Financial partnerships with other organizations may also help strengthen income and resources. These investments will help underscore the organization's commitment to the process.

**Physical Environment.** The physical facilities, resources, and materials associated with mental health settings should be inviting to diverse cultures with a décor that reflects, and is respectful of, different populations. The overarching goal is to maintain a physical environment that helps families to feel comfortable and welcomed, and which acknowledges their cultural backgrounds.

**Governance and Organizational Infrastructure.** Effective policy-making, leadership and oversight mechanisms are crucial to the delivery of culturally competent care. Particular care should be taken in regard to: 1) board composition, board selection, development, and accountability; 2) governance responsibilities, including policy-making, evaluation, stakeholder communication, community relations and communications, and strategic planning; 3) development and implementation of logic models and strategic, cultural and linguistic competency plans; and 4) leadership and management.

## Statement of the Issue

Latinos/Hispanics are one of the fastest growing segments of the US population. Underutilization of mental health services—paired with a myriad of barriers to access and quality of services—is contributing to growing disparities for Latinos/Hispanics, who are among the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. Thus, organizations that promote culturally and linguistically competent practices through formal and informal policies may help increase the likelihood that Latino/Hispanic children affected by trauma and their families will not only seek treatment, but benefit from those services. According to the National Center for Cultural Competence (Goode & Jackson, 2003), culturally competent organizations must have the capacity to: (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge, and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve. To meet these goals, it is critical that organizations examine their values, principles, activities, and policies to ensure that culturally and linguistically appropriate standards are integrated throughout an organization and undertaken in partnership with the communities they serve. To this end, this document focuses on several key areas that should be addressed when creating a culturally and linguistically competent organization for serving Latino/Hispanic children and families, including leadership, training and workforce development, financial and budgetary allocations, physical environment, governance and organizational structure.



## Recommendations from the Field



Although the following recommendations have been adapted to meet the needs of organizations serving Latino/Hispanic children and families, they can be adapted as necessary to serve various populations. For additional recommendations, see Martinez and Van Buren (2008) and the materials developed by the National Center for Cultural Competence (see <http://www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/> for more information).

### Leadership

- Implement policies and procedures that integrate cultural and linguistic competence into service delivery and other core functions of the agency. These may include participatory management practices that create shared ownership, creating a safe environment for managing differences, capitalizing on the strengths and assets of a diverse workforce, monitoring and evaluating progress, and maintaining focus on the long-term goals of cultural and linguistic competence.
- Develop and implement written policies to recruit and retain staff members who have the knowledge base and experience to effectively provide services to racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse populations.
- Identify, use, and/or adapt evidence-based and promising practices, practice-based evidence, and community-defined evidence practices that are culturally and linguistically competent for Latinos/Hispanics.

### Training and Workforce Development

- Provide professional development, incentives, and financial support for the improvement of cultural and linguistic competence at the board, program, and faculty and/or staff levels.
- Develop performance standards for training in cultural and linguistic competence.
- Ensure that orientation, training, and continuing education content addresses the needs of staff and the populations served and are customized to fit staff roles (e.g., clinical, administrative, marketing, etc.).
- Disseminate information on staff training policies and opportunities in cultural competence within and outside the agency.

### Financial and Budgetary Allocations

- Designate dedicated budget line-items for cultural and linguistic competence development activities.
- Include a specific allocation/line item to provide for certified Spanish mental health interpreters.
- Include a specific allocation/line item to support the participation of culturally diverse families and youth on governance boards and committees. This includes stipends, food, travel, child care costs, interpretation, and translation costs.
- Identify and implement training curricula; community outreach and engagement; performance evaluation activities; incentives for staff recruitment and retention efforts; guidelines for staff certification/licensure; family involvement; and distance learning and other opportunities.

*Una abeja no hace una colmena.\**

### Physical Environment

- Display pictures, posters, artwork and other decor that reflect the Latino/Hispanic culture.
- Ensure that magazines, brochures, and other printed materials in reception areas are of interest to—and a reflection of—the diverse Latino/Hispanic cultures in the communities served.
- Provide literature that addresses stigma, normalizes help-seeking behavior, and explains the therapeutic process.
- Consider possible client concerns about privacy when designing waiting areas and other public spaces.
- Ensure that videos, films or other media resources that are used for health education, treatment, or other interventions, reflect the Latino/Hispanic culture.
- Ensure that staff at all levels value the diversity of the clients being served and create a respectful environment.

### Governance and Organizational Infrastructure

- Ensure that the agency's governing body is proportionally representative of the Latino/Hispanic children, youth and families served.
- Provide ongoing training, consultation, and support to enhance the knowledge and skills of members of the governing body in cultural and linguistic competence.
- Develop policies and procedures, in partnership with the community served, to ensure cultural and linguistic competence in the following areas: 1) general administrative policies; 2) personnel and benefits; 3) fiscal policies; 4) safety and security; 5) language access/communication; and 6) family/youth/community involvement.
- Ensure that a cultural and linguistic competence (CLC) plan is developed, implemented, reviewed and revised on a regular basis. The governing board and management staff should be responsible and accountable for implementing, monitoring, and revising the CLC Plan. The CLC Plan should be developed and reviewed jointly with youth, families and the community.



## Recommendations from the Field (continued)



### Resilience

- Enhance resilience within the organization and the Latino/Hispanic communities being served by providing a transparent management structure.
- Conduct business in open forums using policies and procedures that the public has had a voice in developing.
- Be willing to adapt policies and procedures and be flexible based upon the community's input and evolving needs.
- Institute an open grievance process that ensures accountability and a willingness to operate under a continuous quality improvement process.
- Promote the involvement of youth, family, and consumers in the management and operations of the organization.
- Focus on the strengths and celebrate the successes of youth, family, consumers, and the community.

### Family/Youth Engagement

- Ensure representation of Latinos/Hispanics on steering and planning groups as well as organizational governance and management teams which have decision-making authority in the agency (purely advisory boards are insufficient to infuse the voice and experience of youth, family, and consumers).
- Involve Latino/Hispanic youth, family, and consumers when conducting community needs assessments. Ensure that all decisions on best practices incorporate and address the community's consensus regarding their unique needs.

## Community Examples/Best Practices



### Governing Body Representation

- **Butte County Connecting Circles of Care (CCOC)** - Has diverse representation on the governing board. Contact: Michael Clarke, Project Director. Web-based information about Butte County available through presentation done by Yang, Z., Vang, C., Vang, J., & Morris, A. (n.d.) *Connecting circles of care: Building a systems of care*, Retrieved November 8, 2008, from [www.tapartnership.org/resources/Winter07/Day3/ReachingOut\\_EthnicCommunity.pdf](http://www.tapartnership.org/resources/Winter07/Day3/ReachingOut_EthnicCommunity.pdf)

### Cultural Organizational Self Assessment

- **The Family Voices Network of Erie County** - Has developed and implemented a program of *Cultural and Linguistic Competence (CLC)* self-assessment to inform policies and structures related to CLC. Contact: Doris Carbonell-Medina, Director Cultural Competency & Diversity Initiatives.  
⇒ Website: [www.familyvoicesnetwork.org/en/](http://www.familyvoicesnetwork.org/en/)  
⇒ 478 Main Street, Room 511, Hens & Kelly Building, Buffalo, NY 14202
- **McHenry County Mental Health Board's Family CARE program** - Uses *Cultural and Linguistic Competence (CLC)* self-assessment. Contact: Juan Escutia, Cultural and Linguistic Competency Coordinator.  
⇒ Website: [www.mc708.org/FamilyCARE/FamilyCare.aspx](http://www.mc708.org/FamilyCARE/FamilyCare.aspx)  
⇒ 333 Commerce Dr., Crystal Lake, IL 60014

### Cultural and Linguistic Competence (CLC) Policies and Procedures

- *Broward County's system transformation: The development of a cultural competence infrastructure*. Presented at the Portland Research & Training Center's 2007 Building On Family Strengths Conference, May 31-June 2, 2007, Portland, OR. Retrieved November 8, 2008 from [www.rtc.pdx.edu/conference/Presentations/pdf13McShan.pdf](http://www.rtc.pdx.edu/conference/Presentations/pdf13McShan.pdf)

### Cultural and Linguistic Competence (CLC) Plan Implementation

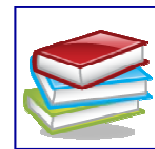
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## Resources



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- Hogg Foundation for Mental Health at the University of Texas at Austin. Website: [www.hogg.utexas.edu/programs\\_cai\\_tools.html](http://www.hogg.utexas.edu/programs_cai_tools.html)
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*\*Dichos translation: One bee doesn't make a hive.*

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