

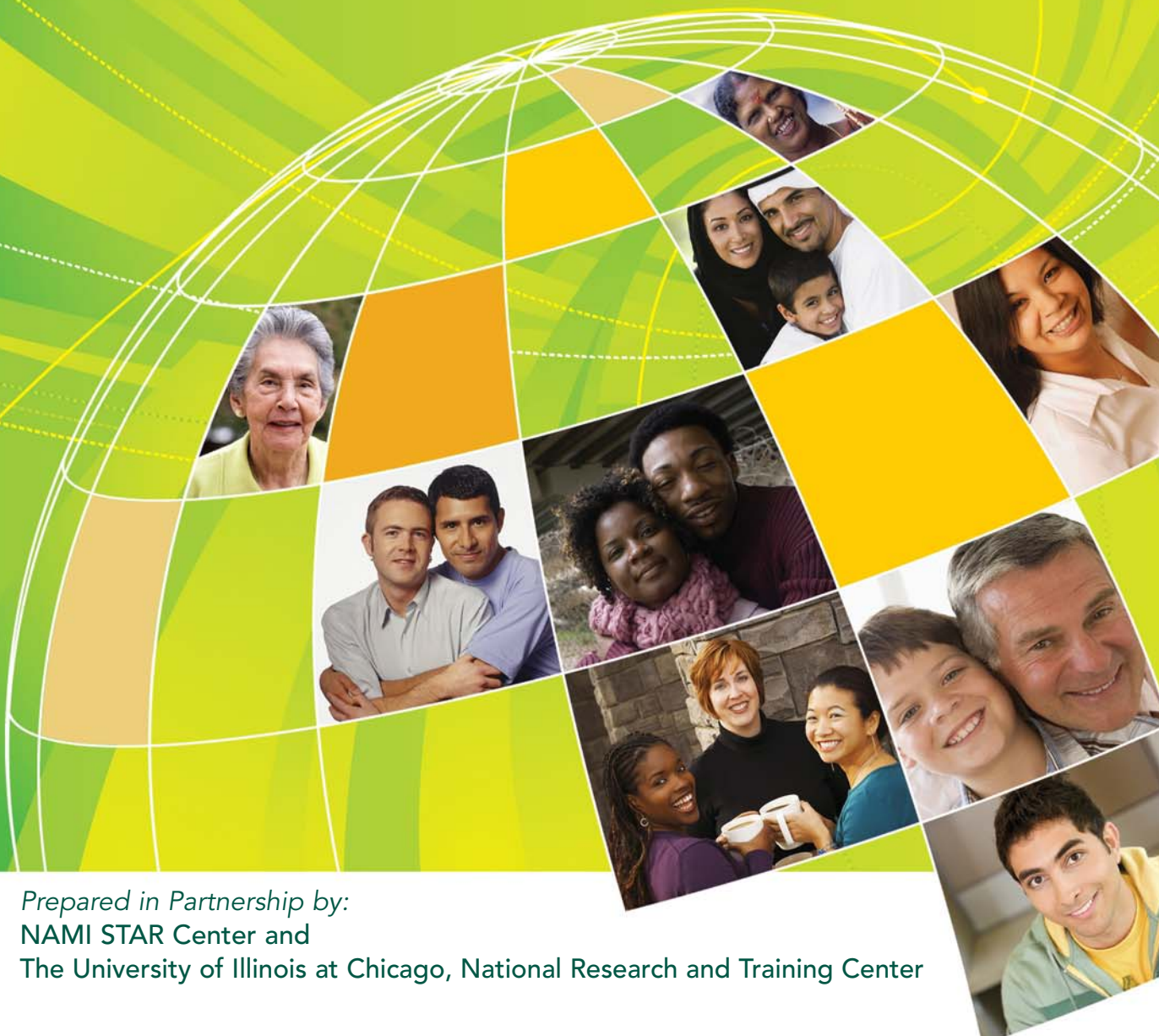


# STAR Center

Support, Technical Assistance and Resources Center

## Cultural Competency in Mental Health Peer-run Programs and Self-help Groups:

A Tool to Assess and Enhance Your Services



*Prepared in Partnership by:*  
NAMI STAR Center and  
The University of Illinois at Chicago, National Research and Training Center

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- Recovery Empowerment Network
- United Self-Help
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# Introduction

This tool was created to help mental health, consumer-operated programs and self-help groups assess their own cultural competency. By using it, you'll identify the ways in which your activities are already responsive to culturally diverse peers and areas where you could use some improvement. You'll also create specific action plans to enhance your cultural competency in five important areas.

## Why Assess Your Program's Cultural Competency

You may feel that your peer-run group or program already does a pretty good job of serving people from all walks of life. There's a widespread belief that sharing the experience of mental health recovery puts individuals on equal footing with each other despite any cultural differences. Also, many find that coping with serious emotional distress makes peers more empathetic toward each other. This common ground is why mutual support is such a critical component of recovery. Nonetheless, *we all* have more to learn about cultures and lifestyles that differ from our own.

There's a myth that being culturally sensitive means treating everyone "the same" or "as equals." In fact, this is only half the battle. Certainly, shared experiences, respect and equal opportunity are essential when providing peer support. However, cultural competency involves *embracing and acting on* different cultural viewpoints—not setting them aside or simply accepting them. Acknowledging the heritage of people from diverse backgrounds is highly important.

In a national survey, we identified people in recovery who do and don't use peer support and are members of racial and ethnic minority groups. When asked why they weren't in peer programs, many expressed concerns about not feeling understood or accepted. Even those who do use peer support felt that peer programs are sometimes disrespectful toward their cultural beliefs and values, even though the membership is caring. Some people feared "rocking the boat" by openly expressing their cultural views and lifestyles in peer programs.

Here's the moral of the story: Even if your program's environment is welcoming, there are ways to be more

### Remember...

This assessment is not a test. Peer supporters need to develop cultural competency skills just like any other service provider. Also, becoming competent is an ongoing process. By using this tool, you're taking the first step in an ongoing commitment to embrace diversity in mental health recovery.

responsive to people from different walks of life. When programs are responsive, the equality fostered by "treating all people the same" becomes replaced by the ability to embrace all people as *different* while enjoying the richness this brings to everyone's lives.

## Basic Definitions

The following definitions introduce the purpose of this assessment and its focus areas.

**Cultural Diversity** refers to the unique characteristics that all of us possess, both distinguishing us as individuals and identifying us as belonging to different groups. Diversity embraces the richness inherent in people's race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, religion, sexual orientation, family identification, immigration status, functional ability and age.

**Cultural Competency** is the ability to interact effectively and comfortably with people from different cultures. It involves four aspects. The first is *becoming aware* of your own beliefs, prejudices and discriminatory behavior. Second is *changing your beliefs and attitudes* about people who differ from you in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, sexuality and other characteristics. Third is *gaining knowledge* about beliefs and practices in different cultures. The fourth is *developing communication* skills to interact sensitively with diverse individuals.

**Dynamics of Difference** refers to the power imbalances that influence interactions between people of different cultures. These power imbalances can create misperceptions, distrust and misunderstandings in communication. Culturally competent people understand that power imbalances arise when people from more advantaged groups (e.g., white, service provider, wealthy) interact with those from less-advantaged communities. They also are open to correcting their behavior based on constructive feedback from diverse people. Culturally competent programs take account of the dynamics of difference by adapting their services to help diverse communities

feel comfortable and have a sense of belonging. You'll learn more about what we mean by dynamics of difference as you complete this assessment.

**Most Prevalent Cultural Group** refers to the most common cultural groups in your local community aside from white English-speaking individuals. These include racial/ethnic groups, age, gender, immigration status, disability status and so on. It's important to be aware of your community's most prevalent cultural groups. To do this, you can visit a U.S. Bureau of the Census website that will help you discover the most prevalent groups in your city, town, county or zip code area. The website address and instructions are in the Appendix. Try it—it's easy!

## How to Use This Tool

### For each of the five focus areas, you will:

- Review why the area is an important part of cultural competency in peer programs and self-help groups
- Learn about where to look when conducting your assessment in that area
- Rate your program on how well it meets the given criteria
- Consider and act on ways to improve your competency in that area

Each section concludes with concrete suggestions about steps you might take to improve your group or organization in that focus area. Also provided are "Bright Ideas" and tips from real peer-run programs to help you immediately take the next step towards your goal. However, don't just follow these suggestions. They may not be appropriate for your group or community. Feel free to be creative and think of ideas that make sense for your local area. Following the assessment, we summarize the challenges peer supporters face in addressing cultural competency. We also review the characteristics of culturally competent peer supporters. We end by suggesting how you might create an action plan to identify your group's goals and how you will act upon them, along with some helpful resources on cultural competency.

It is important to complete this assessment for each of the five focus areas. At first, not all of the areas may be

relevant to your program or group. For example, you may not have a mission statement or written policies because you operate informally. Or, you may not currently provide training to staff or volunteers. However, if you are using this tool you are probably motivated to develop your program further. So use this opportunity to create program elements that foster inclusiveness while also taking your program to the next level.

You might decide to appoint a new Diversity Committee to complete this assessment and bring the results back to the larger group to develop an action plan. You can also use already existing committees in this fashion. If your group is small and a committee is impractical, make sure that more than one person is involved. You can do whatever works best for your group or program. However, it's critical to: 1) include people from diverse backgrounds in the assessment process; and 2) include both providers and recipients of self-help services. Also, try to avoid the idea that cultural competency is only addressed by a specific group or committee since this effort should belong to your entire program. Finally, it's also essential to make a commitment to act on the results of your assessment.

If multiple people complete the assessment, you'll want to assure them that their responses will be anonymous. This way, they can be completely honest about their concerns regarding cultural competence. Many programs find it best to complete this assessment annually. This helps them monitor their progress. It also allows them to adjust their plans, as needed.

People often have very strong feelings about race, ethnicity, culture, gender and sexual orientation, as well as the systematic and institutional oppression that many groups face. This means that enhancing cultural competency requires patience, humility and the willingness to change.

It's hard to let go of ideas we have about our own cultural experience and lack of prejudice. However, it is necessary to do this in order to open our minds and become good listeners. As experts suggest, we must put aside the things we think we know, in order to learn the things we don't know. We learn best about this topic by asking, listening and then acting.

...don't just follow these suggestions. They may not be appropriate for your group or community. Feel free to be creative and think of ideas that make sense for your local area.

# How This Tool Was Evaluated

This tool was evaluated in a national pilot test. We wanted to learn whether mental health peer-run programs and self-help groups find this tool easy to use and effective in bringing about needed changes. An invitation went out to peer-run programs across the country and nine programs were chosen to participate

By completing this assessment, you are committing to listening and acting.

in the evaluation. The programs are in Arizona, California, Oregon, Texas, Wisconsin and Hawaii. Each program participated in a two-hour training to discuss the tool and the programs' roles and responsibilities in the evaluation. After the training, the participants used the tool to rate their organizations' levels of cultural competency and to develop Diversity Action Plans to address areas where they wanted to be more inclusive. They also participated in biweekly telephone meetings to discuss their successes and challenges as they applied their Diversity Action Plans.

Each program completed a pre-test and a post-test before and after three months of using the tool and their Diversity Action Plans. The programs universally found the tool to be user-friendly, encouraging and practical.

Results from this pilot test showed that most of the participating programs made important changes in their organization to become more culturally competent. Some of the survey items asked about the nature of the peer programs and their existing infrastructure. According to survey respondents, only 11 percent of agencies indicated that their mission statement specifically mentioned cultural and linguistic competence. However, more than 67 percent reported that this component was included after participating. Another area where improvement was noted was in the development of culturally-relevant policies. Overall, 55 percent of agencies reported improving their program policies in order to encourage staff and members to learn more about cultural beliefs and practices within the local community. The pilot test only lasted three months, therefore these policies were still mostly informal and in the development stages.

With regard to services offered specifically for culturally diverse individuals (e.g., groups, mutual aid), less than half (44 percent) of agencies reported that such groups already existed at their agencies. After their participation, over three-quarters (78 percent) reported convening such groups and offering other culturally specific services within their agencies. Furthermore, culturally competent peer education also improved. Sixty-seven percent of agencies indicated moderate improvements in peer education about cultural competency, with 11 percent noting substantial improvements in this area.

The impact of making changes in program environments were also noted in the survey. The proportion of agencies with signs in diverse languages doubled, with 33 percent noting these postings before participation and 67 percent indicating use of these materials after participation.

The peer-run programs in the evaluation did face some challenges in using the tool and in making changes to their programs in order to be more inclusive. It was reported that many of their members felt hesitant or intruded upon when the topics of race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation and diversity were raised. Some programs found it difficult to find cultural experts and leaders to assist in their staff and membership training efforts.

All of the pilot programs discussed the challenge of accommodating different cultural viewpoints about the nature of mental health and mental illness. Most programs also confronted the pervasive stigma about mental illness across cultures, leading many diverse people to avoid help. Finally, program leaders discussed the challenges they had in being completely honest throughout the assessment process, including the need to regularly check one another to ensure ongoing objectivity about their struggles to be inclusive.

Throughout this guide you will find tips on how these peer-run programs met the challenges of developing welcoming environments and suitable supports for people from many different walks of life. We commend these organizations for their innovative ideas, commitment to reaching out to others, dedication and courage in sharing their struggles in becoming more culturally competent. We hope you can use their creative ideas as a springboard for your own.

# FOCUS AREA



## Administration, Policies and Guidelines

### Why Does This Matter?

Whether your peer program is free-standing or part of a larger organization, you will have procedures, policies and guidelines for how things work and how people relate to one another. Within this structure, program leaders, peer staff and members set the tone for supporting culturally diverse values and practices. Policies and procedures that specify how people should be treated enable your program to more effectively manage the dynamics of difference. The leadership guides everyone's ability to effectively offer and receive services and supports across cultures. So, the expectation of respectful attitudes and behaviors towards diverse individuals should be integrated in your structure, policies and guidelines. You may want to use leaders from diverse cultures in your community to help you examine and adapt your current structure and policies. These cultural leaders should not just be members of these communities but should also have specific expertise and knowledge in cultural competency.

### Where Do We Look?

The following indicators will help you determine if your program or group is welcoming to and inclusive of people of different cultures.

#### Your mission statement or introductory materials.

- These materials express a clear commitment to respond to the strengths and needs of diverse individuals.
- Your mission statement and policies are available in the languages of the most prevalent cultural groups in your community.

#### Your policies/guidelines and rules of conduct.

- Emphasize your commitment to equal opportunity and nondiscriminatory practices across cultures.

You may want to use leaders from diverse cultures in your community to help you examine and adapt your current structure and policies. These cultural leaders should not just be members of these communities, but should also have specific expertise and knowledge in cultural competency.

- Convey your expectation that all staff, volunteers and participants acknowledge and respect cultural and other differences between people.
- Are in line with standards published by respected organizations such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health (see website address in the Appendix).
- Suggest ways that staff and group leaders can identify their own biases and express their cultural awareness (examples are given throughout this assessment).
- Explicitly endorse the importance of having culturally diverse leadership.

#### Your conflict or grievance procedures.

- Procedures are sensitive to communication needs and norms across cultures and minority groups such as women or gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual (GLBT) individuals. Examples of this include allowing people to have an advocate with them for support during conflict negotiation or accommodating the use of stories and metaphors when describing problems.

#### Procedures used to gather feedback from your members.

- Your ongoing surveys or informal discussions about member satisfaction include questions about your program's willingness and ability to embrace people from many different communities.
- You hold periodic focus groups or listening sessions to hear from diverse members what would make their participation more comfortable.

An agenda of planned diversity activities for the year.

- Activities don't need to be expensive to be effective. Inviting a guest speaker to share cultural traditions or hosting an ethnic food potluck are fun and inexpensive strategies.
- The existence of an appointed person or committee devoted to diversity activities.

Designated funding to support multicultural activities in the program or group.

- Lack of funding is a big problem, but try to avoid letting this become an excuse. If your program receives external funds, then some amount should be committed to this effort, even if it is small. This can be supplemented with free local events.

## Administration, Policies and Guidelines: How Do We Rate?

1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My program or group does not yet have formal policies or guidelines that specifically address cultural competence and inclusion of diverse peers.</li> <li>• We do not currently have a committee or group of individuals devoted to developing or instituting diversity activities.</li> <li>• (If applicable) We do not allocate any of our funding to support diversity activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My program has identified the most prevalent cultural groups in our local community.</li> <li>• My program has a committee or group of individuals who are addressing cultural competency.</li> <li>• Our mission statement mentions our program's commitment to cultural competency.</li> <li>• Our policies and procedures prohibit discrimination and encourage inclusion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My program has conducted a cultural competency assessment and made a specific plan with action steps.</li> <li>• We have guidelines to encourage culturally competent interactions and for handling culturally insensitive attitudes and behaviors.</li> <li>• We have an agenda of planned diversity activities throughout the year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition to cultural guidelines and policies, my program or group has obtained or budgeted funding for diversity activities.</li> <li>• We regularly gather feedback from cultural leaders in our community about whether our program meets the needs of people from diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>• Our strategic planning process includes specific goals for enhancing cultural competency.</li> </ul>

How well do your administration, policies and guidelines encourage inclusiveness and promote diversity among your leadership?

**Our Rating:**

## What Are Next Steps for Our Action Plan?

- Review your mission statement and the materials that describe your activities to newcomers. Include in these documents your commitment to meeting the needs of diverse people. Likewise, ensure that nothing offensive or stereotypical is inadvertently included in these materials.

- Ensure that any job advertisements or volunteer recruitment materials reflect equal opportunity and nondiscriminatory practices. As described in the next section, develop a plan for recruiting diverse individuals as leaders, staff and members.
- Create policies or guidelines that address the expectation of respect towards diverse cultures and other groups (e.g., GLBT individuals, people with physical disabilities, immigrants, older individuals). Develop a process for fairly

Assign a point person or committee to be responsible for cultural competency activities, who will oversee the development of a cultural competency plan and create procedures for evaluating and updating the plan.

and comfortably addressing cross-cultural conflicts that may arise in your program or during groups.

- Assign a point person or committee to be responsible for cultural competency activities. They will oversee the development of a cultural competency plan and procedures for evaluating and updating the plan. They also should have authority to implement the plan.
- Pursue or create funding opportunities to support multicultural activities in your program (bake or yard sales are simple yet effective). To manage costs, these funds can be used to attend or support cultural events in your community or nearby.
- Design a process to gather ideas and input from cultural groups in your program, such as through anonymous surveys or focus groups.

## Bright Idea!

You may be wondering how to re-write your policies and guidelines to better reflect a commitment to diversity without offending your members from the majority culture (Caucasians, heterosexuals, etc.). One possibility is to invite a cultural leader from the community (such as a religious leader, a healer or an educator) to visit your program and offer suggestions about how it might be more inclusive. You might also discuss how best to encourage unity rather than divisiveness across cultures. If you don't already have diverse peers in your program, this would be a good time to discuss why not and how you might reach out to them.

You also might invite a cultural leader to hold a special meeting with diverse participants in your program to discuss ways the program is and is not responsive to their beliefs and values. This is only a good option if you feel ready to act upon what is learned at this meeting. You might also want to hold a special meeting with majority culture participants to discuss ways the program is and isn't fully addressing their needs as well. This will reduce feelings of

divisiveness or the appearance of blaming one group at the expense of the other. Remember, you may need to speak with more than one cultural leader until you find one who supports your program and recovery mission. As we all know, stigma and misunderstanding about mental illness prevail across cultures.

## Try This!

Try these strategies used by the peer-run programs in our pilot test to address the goals of Focus Area #1.

1. Hold a special staff retreat to review and revise your mission statement and policies for inclusiveness of diversity.
2. Change your program handbook to include a broader range of acknowledged holidays and celebrations. For example, one program decided to add Cinco de Mayo to its holiday calendar. Another held a special celebration to acknowledge the anniversary of the Brown vs. the Board of Education Supreme Court ruling to end public school segregation.
3. Change your time-off policy to allow peer staff to choose the holidays they wish to take off, rather than setting them in advance.
4. Include an anonymous survey in the next issue of your program's newsletter in order to gather a wider range of ideas and input on diversity.
5. Deal with feelings of divisiveness by acknowledging people's beliefs or fears, even if they are in conflict with your own. It helps to accept that being uncomfortable is a part of change and growth for all of us. But, if people feel heard and included in the process, their fears and hesitance often ease over time. No matter what, this process takes time and patience.

Remember, enhancing cultural competency is not for white peer providers alone. Everybody—no matter what their background—has things to learn about how people from diverse communities view their mental health and how they wish to be treated.

# FOCUS AREA



## Peer Providers and Group Leaders

### Why Does This Matter?

Many providers in the United States are taught to approach mental health based on white, middle-class norms and beliefs. Others assume that their beliefs (whatever they may be) about what causes and reduces emotional difficulties are universally true. Peer supporters, with their lived experience of mental health challenges, are often no exception. Additionally, they may have limited experience with people who do not share their particular background.

Since peers are the foundation of self-help and mutual assistance, their cultural skills are critical for engaging and supporting people with mental health issues. These skills stem from shared experiences of mental health problems and social stigma. Peer supporters and leadership who come from diverse backgrounds themselves benefit from culturally competent recruitment, retention and promotion practices. Remember, enhancing cultural competency is not for white peer providers alone. Everybody—no matter what their background—has things to learn about how people from diverse communities view their mental health experience and how they wish to be treated. This is why cultural competency should be required of all peer providers, their leaders and the programs they run.

### Where Do We Look?

The following indicators will help you determine if your program or group is welcoming to and inclusive of people of different cultures.

**The cultural composition of your peer staff, volunteers or leadership.**

- Leadership/staff/volunteers reflect the most prevalent cultural groups in your community.

**Your policies or group guidelines about training and education.**

- Policies/guidelines require peer providers and leadership to receive formal training on cultural competency, either in-house, externally or online.
- Staff and managers' attendance at in-house or external educational programs or multi-cultural events and trainings (e.g., internal or external to your program, classroom or Internet-based) is documented through attendance sheets, personnel files, etc.

**Your personnel files contain information regarding staff/volunteer training and experience.**

- Files document attendance at multicultural events and trainings (e.g., internal or external to your program, classroom or Internet-based).

**Observations of interactions among diverse peer staff and volunteers.**

- Performance reviews include notations about cross-cultural communication skills (see further information about communication skills in Focus Area #5).
- Staff/volunteers use culturally appropriate communication techniques when interacting with each other.

**Observations of interactions between peer staff and participants.**

- Staff/volunteers use culturally appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication strategies when interacting with program participants.
- Staff/volunteers have the ability to respond to different cultural beliefs about the causes and treatment of emotional and psychiatric distress.
- Discussions take place at program and other meetings about the cultural competency of staff and leadership.
- Staff's cultural competency is assessed as part of yearly performance evaluations, if used.

# Peer Providers and Group Leaders: How Do We Rate?

1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our peer providers or group leaders do not yet have skills in this area.</li> <li>• Our group does not currently offer or support diversity training and events and we have not yet discussed doing so.</li> <li>• Our current peer supporters are not evaluated in regard to their cultural competency.</li> <li>• We haven't hired or set goals to recruit and retain staff/volunteers who belong to or work with diverse groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My program or group is offering training on cultural competency.</li> <li>• We have made plans to recruit and retain diverse staff, volunteers and leaders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My program or group offers and requires staff attendance at cultural competency trainings and events.</li> <li>• Our program has recruited and retained one staff person or volunteer from the most prevalent cultural group (other than Caucasian) in our community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Besides a coordinated training program, we've recruited multiple people from the prevalent cultural groups in our community.</li> <li>• Peer staff and leadership are formally or informally evaluated regarding their cultural competency in yearly evaluations.</li> <li>• We regularly discuss ways to increase and support cultural competency among our peer providers, group leaders and volunteers.</li> </ul>

How well do your administration, policies and guidelines encourage inclusiveness and promote diversity among your leadership?

## Our Rating:

## What Are Next Steps for Our Action Plan?

- Think about your current peer staff, volunteers and leaders. Are they from diverse backgrounds? Do they have training or experience regarding multicultural diversity and how to incorporate diverse beliefs into programs? If not, what training or events in your community can they attend to start gaining knowledge and skills?
- What types of training can you offer in-house? You can take advantage of multiple resources that deal with cultural competence and diversity (see Appendix). Can you invite cultural leaders into your program or group to conduct training?
- Review your program's or group's process for recruiting and retaining employees and volunteers. Are you reaching out to all of the cultures represented in your community with information about staff/volunteer positions? If not, what are some ways you can reach diverse communities with this information? For example, you can post job advertisements on bulletin boards in places of worship or in neighborhood flyers/newspapers. Consider whether these ads can be translated into the prevalent languages of your community.
- Take a look at your recruitment process. Do you discuss cultural competency when interviewing people? If not, consider adding a discussion of your program's commitment to diversity during the interviewing process. This will help people

know your organization's expectations before they pursue a job or volunteer position.

- Consider the current process for annually reviewing the performance of your peer staff, volunteers and group leaders. Is there such a process? If so, are cultural competency skills included in the evaluation?

## Bright Idea!

Sponsor an annual or biannual "Culture Day" in your program or group. Staff, volunteers and participants can work individually or as a group to develop brief presentations on something special about their cultural background or family traditions. They can serve traditional food, read poetry, show a short video or play music representative of their culture. This is a fun way for everyone to learn more about each other in a nonthreatening way. Everyone should be encouraged to ask questions about differing beliefs or customs. Many people are afraid to ask questions for fear of offending someone unintentionally, but even "dumb questions" can be welcome when asked in the spirit of learning and sharing.

## Try This!

Try these strategies used by the peer-run programs in our pilot test to address the goals of Focus Area #2.

1. If you are unable to sponsor a special Culture Day, find other ongoing events to which you can add cultural activities (such as music, food and dance). For example, one peer program included new cultural activities at their program's annual summer picnic.
2. Start a book club, choosing books from across cultures. Discuss how the stories or events are similar and different compared to your own lives and traditions.
3. If there's a college or university in your community, identify someone on the faculty who is interested in multiculturalism and could

be invited to offer (free) training to your staff and membership. College and university websites often post faculty résumés which will describe their areas of interest and expertise. In exchange, offer to give a free presentation on recovery and self-help during one of their classes, if relevant.

4. The National Center for Cultural Competence maintains a database of cultural trainers from around the country and may have people available in your community. See the Resource List at the back of this guide for their contact information.
5. Sponsor a half-day meeting or roundtable discussion on cultural inclusiveness in peer-run services, inviting your peer staff, membership and board, community leaders and anyone else who would contribute to and benefit from the experience.
6. Make time during a regular meeting to explore the diversity that already exists within the program. What are the different traditions, beliefs, practices and so on? People may be surprised to find that they're already interacting with peers who have diverse views and practices.



# FOCUS AREA



## Services and Supports

### Why Does This Matter?

Cultural competency is driven by the belief that service effectiveness is enhanced by tailoring treatment or wellness approaches, supports and education to recipients' personal characteristics and heritage. The same is true for peer-run services and supports. Cultural competency also helps diverse peers stay connected to self-help and benefit from it. People naturally respond to peer programs that accommodate their worldviews, traditions and customs.

Consider the fact that there are vast cultural differences in how people define and respond to mental health and behavioral challenges. In some cultures, emotional distress is not viewed as an illness or chemical imbalance but as a spiritual crisis. In others, certain types of distress such as mania are viewed positively, as a sign of the person's ability to communicate with divine spirits. Sometimes, people from the same culture will view these issues differently, depending on how much they have come to accept Western values and ideas. This process of acceptance is called acculturation and should be carefully considered by programs that serve immigrant communities. Programs that recognize and respond to different interpretations of emotional distress are better able to support people in their recovery.

People can also benefit when they can integrate their use of traditional healing practices (such as acupuncture, herbal remedies, yoga, tai chi) with peer support and self-help participation. Awareness and acceptance of indigenous healing and traditional methods can help build trust and rapport with culturally diverse individuals. However, don't assume that all people from a particular culture participate in traditional healing rituals. This may be influenced by their level of acculturation. There are also large differences in

how people from various cultures feel about receiving help from outside their families. Finding ways to include families can increase their comfort with outside assistance and can make peer-run and self-help services more accessible to everyone.

Be aware that, in some cultures, people may not automatically understand why peer support would be beneficial. Thus, your outreach efforts may be enhanced if you clearly describe what kinds of help are available from peers that aren't obtainable from professionals. For example, peers can tell you which programs deliver poor services while professionals may hesitate to criticize other colleagues. As another example, peers may have better knowledge regarding free or low-cost resources in the community. You may need to "sell" the benefits of self-help to people who are more familiar with formal, professional services. It is also important to address issues surrounding confidentiality to avoid cultural stigma for participating in such programs.

### Where Do We Look?

The following indicators will help you determine if your program or group is welcoming to and inclusive of people of different cultures.

**Levels of awareness among your staff and members regarding different cultural traditions and customs related to mental illness, help-seeking and recovery.**

- In everyday interactions, staff, leadership and members acknowledge and incorporate different views about mental illness, help-seeking and recovery.

The degree to which services and supports offered by your program incorporate multicultural beliefs and approaches.

- Manuals, curricula and other materials used by your program specifically mention multicultural beliefs and approaches.
- The number of partnerships you have with diverse organization and groups.
- The number of cultural events or activities your program engages in during the year.

Ability of staff, leadership and volunteers to listen to and engage diverse people.

- Through informal comments, program members indicate that their cultural values and beliefs are acknowledged and respected, promoting feelings of acceptance.
- Program satisfaction assessments (through formal surveys or group discussions) include questions about how well your program or group is accommodating diverse viewpoints and needs.

The cultural composition of your membership.

- Participants reflect the prevalent cultural groups in your community and are appropriately diverse, culturally and otherwise.

Your procedures for reaching out to and engaging people from diverse cultures, including their families as appropriate (issues surrounding language capacity are covered in Focus Area #5).

## Services and Supports: How Do We Rate?

1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our program does not yet support people from diverse cultures.</li> <li>• We don't offer training on different cultural beliefs about mental health.</li> <li>• We haven't included cultural content or events in our activities.</li> <li>• We haven't formed partnerships with diverse community groups.</li> <li>• We don't address cultural responsiveness when assessing participant satisfaction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our organization has made concrete efforts to enhance cultural sensitivity in our services and activities.</li> <li>• We offer education to our peer supporters on cultural variations in understanding and treating emotional problems.</li> <li>• We sponsor or participate in cultural events as part of our programming.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Besides multicultural education and events, we offer assistance that acknowledges how different cultures define and deal with mental health issues.</li> <li>• We've made efforts to reach out to traditional healers.</li> <li>• We formally or informally assess our participants' views of our program's diversity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition to multicultural training, events and services, we've formed partnerships with cultural groups in our community (including groups representing diverse sexual orientations).</li> <li>• We invite indigenous healers to visit our program to train peer supporters and educate participants.</li> <li>• We refer participants to cultural healers when desired.</li> <li>• We change our programming to address any problems members have with our level of cultural competency.</li> </ul>

How well do your administration, policies and guidelines encourage inclusiveness and promote diversity among your leadership?

**Our Rating:**

## What Are Next Steps for Our Action Plan?

- Consider the kinds of education you offer staff and volunteers. Does it include multiculturalism and how to be more inclusive? If not, it can be instituted using free resources (like those in the Appendix). This type of “in-service” training should also include sessions on cultural variations in understanding and treating mental health difficulties.
- Review your program activities to see whether they include multicultural events, cultural information and other diverse content. If not, identify ways to begin adding this to your programming. Can local community cultural leaders assist? Are there diverse program participants (or their family members) who can help diversify programming and group content?
- If you do not yet have partnerships with cultural leaders, you can start by identifying who they are in your community (e.g., a minister or rabbi, an Imam, a medicine person, an advocate), drawing upon the knowledge/resources of staff, volunteers and peer participants. Many cultural groups will respond well if they know you honestly want to reach out to people in their communities and need their help to do so. But, they also will want detailed information about what you do, how you help people and how you are willing or able to make people from diverse communities feel welcome and understood.
- Take a look at your process for assessing participant satisfaction with your services and supports. If you don’t directly ask participants how they feel about your cultural sensitivity, can you begin doing so? There’s a sample participant survey at the end of this guide that you can adapt for your program.
- If you’re located in a diverse community and don’t have a diverse membership, it may be because your program doesn’t feel welcoming to various cultures, even if you try to be open and accepting.

## Bright Idea!



One of the hardest things about addressing your program’s cultural competency is learning that “color blindness” can be off-putting to people of different cultures, even if they don’t tell you this directly. Many people from minority communities feel that treating everyone the same obscures the ways their unique backgrounds affect their ability to use and benefit from peer support. When helping people deal with stress and hardship, we need to know and acknowledge how prejudice, racism, sexism, homophobia and institutional discrimination have an impact on their recovery.

To help peer providers, group leaders, volunteers and participants understand this important concept, ask everyone to engage in a simple exercise, adapted from Chow and colleagues (2008). Ask people to make a list on paper of the cultural and other groups with which they most identify. Specifically, they should record their family’s cultural, ethnic and racial background; their personal characteristics (age, gender, sexual orientation, etc.); their family roles and relationships (wife, father, sister, uncle, etc.); their community or other group memberships and any spiritual or religious affiliations. Then, they should circle only the two most important groups on their list. Next, they should pretend they are about to receive peer support from someone who knows everything on the list except those two most important groups. Would that peer be able to provide effective support without knowing about the importance of these two identities? Probably not. In peer settings, we need to see the whole individual and understand how people’s personal backgrounds affect their recovery in order to be culturally competent.

## Try This!

Try these strategies used by the peer-run programs in our pilot test to address the goals of Focus Area #3.

1. Discuss with diverse peers the types of groups and supports they would like to see in your program. When possible, support what they want before introducing what you think they need. This will boost comfort levels and attendance.
2. Start an art class for the membership and use the opportunity to learn about art from different cultures. The class will also provide a safe time for people to make personal works of art that reflect their own cultural backgrounds, while talking about other people's cultures, traditions and perspectives.
3. Once you begin conversations about culture and participants' group memberships, you might find the need to offer a peer support group on grief and loss. Many people have unresolved anger and grief from feeling that they had to "give up" their heritages to fit into American society, while others have been rejected by their people because of mental health issues. For some peers, anger and grief might need to be resolved before cultural celebrations can begin.
4. Offer and widely advertise General Educational Development (GED), English as a Second Language (ESL) and other educational classes at your peer center. These types of classes may attract a broader range of people who are not yet aware of the value of peer support. Being at your center regularly may help them to witness the benefits of mutual support and help.
5. If you offer your membership free toiletries, hair-care supplies and cosmetics, make sure your selection includes products that are used by people from different cultural groups.



# FOCUS AREA



## Program or Group Environment

### Why Does This Matter?

We all know that first impressions mean a lot. This is especially the case when people feel vulnerable and wonder whether they will be accepted in a new setting. Cultural acceptance is communicated by your program's physical environment. Potential members often feel more welcome when they see people who look like them in the posters, paintings or other artwork in your program's public spaces. Providing reading materials and brochures with pictures of people from different cultures and in various languages also communicates acceptance (language is discussed in more detail in the next section). Playing world/ethnic music and offering refreshments acceptable to various cultures during celebrations makes people feel more at home. Seeing peers from one's own cultural community participating in the program also is important. Of course, offering groups and programs in people's own neighborhoods conveys inclusion as well. Finally, accessibility of your building to people with physical disabilities communicates acceptance of all people who need emotional support.



### Where Do We Look?

The following indicators will help you determine if your program or group is welcoming to and inclusive of people of different cultures.

#### **Multicultural decorations are used in your program's posters and artwork.**

- Diverse groups are depicted in the images and content of brochures and reading materials used in your program or group.
- People with different disabilities are also portrayed.

#### **Non-Western, non-Christian holidays are celebrated or acknowledged in your program.**

- The music and food offered at celebrations or holiday events is multi-ethnic.

#### **Diverse groups are represented among the peers in your program or group.**

- The people who staff and attend your program/group represent the most prevalent cultural groups in your community.
- The building where you offer groups or services is architecturally accessible.

Cultural acceptance is communicated by your program's physical environment. Potential members often feel more welcome when they see people who look like them in the posters, paintings or other artwork in your program's public spaces.

## Program or Group Environment: How Do We Rate?

1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our physical environment is not yet accessible and welcoming to people from diverse cultures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our program is taking steps toward changing its physical environment.</li> <li>• We celebrate (or acknowledge) a range of holidays.</li> <li>• We offer ethnic foods and music at our celebrations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Besides a multi-ethnic physical environment and celebration of diverse holidays, we have reading materials and other resources that convey acceptance of people from all walks of life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition to celebratory events and inclusive decorations, we have or are working on increasing the diversity of our program/group participants and providers/leaders.</li> <li>• We also hold activities in a place that is accessible to people with physical disabilities.</li> </ul>

How well do your administration, policies and guidelines encourage inclusiveness and promote diversity among your leadership?

**Our Rating:**

## What Are Next Steps for Our Action Plan?

- Take a look at the building and rooms in which you offer groups or other services. If they don't have artwork or other materials that reflect diverse groups, can you hang posters or prints that are more inclusive?
- Review the brochures and other reading materials about your program. Do they include pictures and content that are reflective of people from different cultures? If not, can plans be made to update these materials?
- If you do not currently offer ethnic foods and world music at celebratory events, consider doing so. Concentrate on the prevalent cultures found in your program or self-help group. These types of food and music do not need to replace European or Western options, but can simply be offered along with them.
- If your schedule does not honor non-Western, non-Christian holidays, it is essential to add them to your agenda (taking into consideration the most prevalent cultural groups living in your community). These celebrations also can be a fun way to educate peers about different cultural traditions.
- If your building's entrance and washrooms are not accessible to people with physical disabilities, can you talk with the landlord or host organization about the Americans with Disabilities Act and explore if they're able to update the space?

## Bright Idea!



Engage your staff, volunteers and program participants in creating a Culture Collage to hang in an often-used public space. Invite everyone to bring in pictures of multicultural people, women, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) individuals, older persons, historical figures and other diverse individuals who are important to them. Spend some time creating a large collage of these pictures.

Encourage the group to name the collage and decide where to hang it. If you run a self-help group, the collage can be posted during each meeting by one of the group leaders. This type of artwork is especially welcoming to new members, who will see the effort made to include people from all walks of life.

## Try This!



Try these strategies used by the peer-run programs in our pilot test to address the goals of Focus Area #4.

1. Ask if any of your peers would be willing to loan their cultural paintings or photographs (especially ones they made themselves) to decorate the office or program space. Rotate them regularly if several peers have art works to loan.
2. Include culturally diverse books, magazines, newsletters, CDs and DVDs in your program's lending library or resource center.
3. Hang a world map in a common area of your program. Encourage peer staff, volunteers and members to mark their country of origin, or that of their family, with a push pin.
4. If you have a website, include photographs of people from the prevalent cultural groups in your community.
5. If you have a movie night, show films about people from different cultures.



# FOCUS AREA



## Communication and Language Capacity

### Why Does This Matter?

Effective communication is key to successfully addressing the dynamics of difference, so that people feel welcome and understood. One way this happens is when providers and group leaders are able to match their verbal and nonverbal cues to their clients' cultural norms. For example, in some cultures, people are uncomfortable with direct eye contact and prefer to look away when speaking to others, as a sign of respect. Others nod or say "okay" to indicate that they understand something, not that they actually agree with it. Cross-cultural conflicts can arise when people who are direct in their speech ("speaking from the brain") interact with people who prefer to use images or metaphors when they talk ("speaking from the heart").

Cross-cultural communication is also strengthened when members of majority cultures are open to hearing that they have offended someone and recognize that conflict is a normal and natural part of life. They would understand the effect that historic distrust has on interactions between people in today's environment. It is essential that they know that they may unintentionally offend others and are open to being corrected.

Additionally, many people who wish to attend peer-run programs are non-English speakers. They need access to peers who speak their languages and materials translated into those languages. It's important to remember that many people who use public services may also have trouble reading or writing in their native languages.

Another consideration involves people with communication disabilities who wish to join your program. This includes individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and who are blind or visually impaired. They require accommodations such as sign language interpreters and materials in Braille or large print, which can be challenging for programs with limited resources to provide.

### Where Do We Look?

The following indicators will help you determine if your program or group is welcoming to and inclusive of people of different cultures.

#### **Observations of your services, meetings and groups.**

- Staff, leadership and participants use or respect differing communication norms.

#### **The language(s) used in materials about your program or group.**

- Languages used represent the most prevalent cultural groups in your community.
- The language(s) used on intake and other program forms.
- The language(s) used in phone reception or voicemail greetings.
- The language(s) used in correspondence with participants.
- The languages used in your job postings.
- The multi-lingual abilities of your peer staff/leaders.

#### **Accessibility to individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired.**

- Availability of sign language interpreters or staff who can sign.
- Ability to communicate using a TDD or operator relay system.

#### **Accessibility to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.**

- Provision of written materials in Braille or large print.

# Communication and Language Capacity: How Do We Rate?

1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My program or group is not yet meeting the communication and language needs of people from diverse cultures.</li> <li>• Peer providers are unaware of differing cultural norms for respectful communication.</li> <li>• Our organization doesn't yet have staff/volunteers who speak our community's prevalent languages.</li> <li>• We haven't been able to translate key materials or phone greetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My program or group is taking steps in this area by training staff in how to respond respectfully to cultural differences in communication norms and practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Besides responding to differences in communication norms, we have one staff/leader who speaks the language of the most prevalent cultural group in our community (or we use interpreter services).</li> <li>• We have translated key program materials and phone greetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our program has multiple staff who speak the most prevalent languages used in our community.</li> <li>• We have translated all key documents and materials, as well as phone greetings and can accommodate people who have lower literacy.</li> <li>• Most or all interactions with diverse peers take place in their preferred languages and accommodate differing communication norms.</li> </ul>

How well do your administration, policies and guidelines encourage inclusiveness and promote diversity among your leadership?

## Our Rating:

## What Are Next Steps for Our Action Plan?

- Provide staff and leadership with cross-cultural communication training. Focus on how cultural norms and practices can influence communication through eye contact, use of gestures, turn-taking, asking and responding to questions, interpersonal space, comfort with silence, being indirect/direct, interrupting, greeting, topics of conversation and use of humor.
- In health and mental health care, the need for translation services greatly exceeds the number of professional interpreters. As the American population changes in the coming decades, this lack of interpreters will become

increasingly problematic. In the long-run, the only real solution to this problem is having trained peer staff and volunteers who can speak one or more of the prevalent languages in your surrounding community.

- In the meantime, staff, volunteers or group leaders can learn some of the key words used in the most prevalent languages, so everyone can communicate at least minimally. Additionally, programs may be able to partner with cultural groups in the community to obtain interpreter services. Issues of confidentiality and stigma need to be taken into account. Similarly, due to confidentiality concerns and lack of training, many experts recommend never using family or friends of peers/clients as interpreters.

- Determine whether someone would be willing to translate materials more affordably than a professional service or for free.
- Accommodate peers with limited English proficiency and limited reading skills by providing service descriptions or educational materials in formats using illustrations, videos/DVDs and other media that are easier to understand.
- Most peer programs cannot afford to provide sign language interpreters without receiving external financial assistance. Barring this, see if you can recruit volunteer sign language interpreters to work in your program. If you do this, make sure you provide them with training about the importance of confidentiality.

## Bright Idea!

Leaders in the prevalent cultures of your community may help you identify bilingual people interested in starting a peer group in their preferred language. You could provide mentoring and training resources for them to start their own groups. This will enrich the field of peer support, as well as reach people with limited English proficiency. Similarly, you may find that churches or other places of worship have members interested in starting peer support groups in their own communities. For example, peer-led, faith-based initiatives are supported by NAMI (see the resources at the end of this assessment) as well as other organizations.

## Try This!

Try these strategies used by the peer-run programs in our pilot test to address the goals of Focus Area #5.

1. Once interpreters are in place, include a newsletter announcement that interpreters can be provided for your groups and activities with seven days advance notice.

2. Offer your program's newsletter in an audio format for people with visual impairments.
3. Partner with a local association for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to staff your program's warm line.
4. Consider the advice offered by a multicultural trainer used by one of our pilot test peer programs: a program is not ready for an influx of cultures until it has completed a cultural self-assessment, training and other preparation. For example, translating all of your materials into other languages before you actually are prepared to offer most/all of your activities in those languages will set everyone up for disappointment and possible conflict. Knowing what you are ready to do and not ready to do is a part of being culturally sensitive. This doesn't mean you will never face language barriers, but that over time you will build up viable solutions.



# Cultural Competency Assessment Ratings

Now that you've gone through this assessment process, you can use the following charts or templates for recording the results of your assessment of the focus areas as well as creating

your action plan. You may want to complete this assessment on a quarterly, biannually or annual basis. This will help you to continue focusing on multicultural issues in your program and will assist you in monitoring your progress. You can see your progress as you complete subsequent assessments.

Focus	Rating	Date	Rating	Date	Rating	Date	Rating	Date
1. Administration, Policies and Guidelines								
2. Peer Providers and Group Leaders								
3. Services and Supports								
4. Program and Group Environment								
5. Communication and Language Capacity								

It may be helpful to allow some time for reflection and discussion about the following or similar questions after you've assessed the focus areas and before you create your action plan.

- How did we do? How was this process helpful? What was surprising?
- What challenging issues and barriers were identified?
- How will we address or approach any issues and barriers?
- What will we focus on as a first action step? What makes sense to address next? And then after that, etc.?
- In what areas could we expect the greatest improvement or development?

Using the Cultural Competency Assessment Ratings form, you can summarize your ratings from all of the focus areas that you examined. Then, using the Diversity Action Plan form, you can decide on what you'd like to do to enhance and increase your cultural competency and diversity efforts over time.

This simple form on page 23 can be copied or you can create your own modified chart.

## Common Challenges in Developing Competency

If you're feeling overwhelmed or even a little defensive, remember that you are not alone.

Many programs and support groups (peer-led or otherwise) are not at levels three or four in these focus areas. It takes funding, commitment, endurance and support for a program to become fully culturally competent. Having said that, we've included in our tips things that you can do without a lot of money to get started on the road to competency. Remember that a strong commitment from your program's leadership is as important as funding.

It also helps to know some of the common challenges that all programs face when they are introducing major changes. Below are some examples to help you be prepared if they happen in your program.

- Peer providers and group leaders may feel they don't have enough time, expertise or support to engage people from diverse cultures.
- Program leadership may feel there isn't enough money or motivation to conduct a cultural competency assessment and act on the results.
- A single individual or committee becomes identified with this issue rather than it being fully integrated into the program's structure, operation and membership.
- Programs may develop a diversity action plan but lose the commitment needed to implement it over time.
- While some peer providers or leadership are open to promoting inclusiveness, others may have a harder time embracing the idea.
- Sometimes staff and leadership are dedicated to cultural competency but peer participants may fear change or have biases to overcome (or vice versa).
- Scarce resources may hinder the ability to develop and offer ongoing multicultural education and events.

## Recognizing Culturally Competent Peer Supporters

Even if your program or group faces the challenges above, peer supporters can exhibit the qualities of cultural competence.

These peers:

- know they always have more to learn about other cultures and groups;
- are willing to identify and work through their own biases and prejudices;
- are willing to recognize and change their intentional and unintentional discriminatory behavior;
- are comfortable with cultural and other differences between themselves and their peers;
- understand that people across cultures have different ways of viewing emotional distress and how to deal with it;
- communicate appropriately using verbal and non-verbal strategies;
- see peers' strengths and problems within the context of their culture, age, gender, sexual orientation and other characteristics;
- accept culturally indigenous forms of treatment when peers talk about them or want to use them; and
- identify barriers that may prevent diverse people from using peer supports and self-help.

(Adapted from Hernandez & LaFromboise, 1985; Ponterott *et al.*, 1996)

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You may wish to survey your program participants and leadership or staff about diversity and cultural competence. On pages 24-26, you will find surveys that you can adapt for your program's purposes. These surveys will help you assess where your program is and what steps need to be taken for further development.

# Our Diversity Action Plan

Make as many copies as need to complete the plan.

Finish Date	
Target Date	
Rating	
Who's Responsible	
Action Steps	
Focus Area #	



# Diversity Survey for Peer-run Group Program Leaders

## How Are We Doing?

We are interested in your opinions about how our program is meeting the needs of people from diverse cultures and groups. This includes multicultural individuals, gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered people, women, older individuals, people with physical disabilities, etc.

Please check all of the items below that you believe are true of our program (leave it blank if you think it is not true). Your answers will be strictly anonymous. Please do not write your name on this survey. Thank you for your feedback!

- People in the program are aware of alternate or traditional healing resources in the community for people of diverse backgrounds.
- People who run the program receive cultural competency training.
- People who attend the program have chances to learn about different cultures or groups.
- The program gathers information about the diversity and language needs of its members.
- The program regularly assesses whether its activities are valued by people from different backgrounds.
- The program has formal policies prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability, etc.
- The program sets annual goals regarding cultural competency of its services and supports.
- The program conducts an annual assessment to make sure it is meeting its cultural competency goals.
- The program ensures equality in the hiring process for all staff.
- Any job openings in the program are advertised in local publications that target diverse groups in your community.
- The program ensures equity in the promotion process by identifying and eliminating barriers due to race, ethnicity, culture or other personal characteristics (such as women, youth/elderly, GLBT, etc.).
- The program's board of directors or advisory board includes diverse people.
- The program has a Diversity Committee. Such a committee is a group of staff and members who address diversity issues in the program.
- The program's Diversity Committee has representatives from different racial, ethnic, cultural and other groups.
- The program has networking relationships with community groups from different races, ethnicities, cultures and other diverse characteristics.

Thank you for your input. Now, we'd like to know a little bit more about you. Remember, your answers are completely anonymous. Please do not put your name or other personal information on this survey.

1. Please check below which of the following best describes your *major* role in this program.

- Management
- Educator/trainer
- Administrative support
- Peer service recipient
- Advisory or board member
- Consultant
- Peer provider
- Advocate

2. Please indicate the length of time you have been involved with this program.

- Less than one year
- One to five years
- More than five years

3. Please indicate your gender.

- Male
- Female
- Transgender

4. Please indicate your racial/ethnic identity using one of the categories below:

- African American/Black
- American Indian/Native
- American (including Alaskan native)
- Asian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Pacific Islander
- White, European, non-Latino/a
- Multiethnic/other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

My additional comments:

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# APPENDIX:

## Resources

### **Multicultural Action Center**

*National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)*

This website provides materials regarding mental illness and providing services to diverse individuals. It offers several fact sheets that are translated into different languages for peers and their families. In addition, it provides manuals regarding outreach to diverse people and links to other organizations.

[www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Find\\_Support/Multicultural\\_Support/Resources/MAC\\_Resources.htm](http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Find_Support/Multicultural_Support/Resources/MAC_Resources.htm)

### **Culture, Race and Ethnicity: A to the Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health**

This document discusses the mental health disparities affecting racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. The report sheds light on the nature and extent of mental health disparities, the evidence for the need for mental health services and some promising developments toward the elimination of mental health disparities.

[www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/cre](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/cre)

### **National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC)**

*Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development*

This organization provides tools and guidance to increase the capacity of health and mental health programs to design, implement and evaluate culturally and linguistically competent services. They also provide a database of diversity trainers nationwide.

*NCCC Resources*

[www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/information/providers.html](http://www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/information/providers.html)

*NCCC Diversity Trainers/Consultant Pool*

[www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/NCCC/consultants/index.html](http://www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/NCCC/consultants/index.html)

### **Resource Center to Promote Acceptance, Dignity and Social Inclusion Associated with Mental Health (ADS Center)**

This SAMHSA-funded center provides resources and materials to reduce discrimination and promote inclusion for people in mental health recovery.

[www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov](http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov)

### **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Health Access Project**

This website outlines community standards of practice for providing quality health care services to GLBT individuals. The organization can provide training and technical assistance to help providers eliminate barriers to care and deliver culturally competent services.

[www.glbthealth.org](http://www.glbthealth.org)

### **Cultural Competence Resources for Health Care Providers**

*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration*

This website provides culture- and language-specific guides, curricula and web-based training regarding health-related services to diverse groups. It also includes cultural competency assessments.

[www.hrsa.gov/culturalcompetence](http://www.hrsa.gov/culturalcompetence)

### **Hablamos Juntos**

This website focuses on ways to improve communication between service providers and clients with limited English proficiency. It provides a toolkit for understanding an organization's translation needs. In addition, it provides some symbols that can be used to convey basic information at your program's location. This site is geared specifically to health care organizations, but some of the information can be applied to peer-run programs.

<http://hablamosjuntos.org>

### **United States Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (USPRA) Multicultural Principles**

This link outlines the principles defined by USPRA for providing multicultural psychiatric rehabilitation services.

[www.uspra.org](http://www.uspra.org)

### **Mental Health Interpreter Training Programs**

This site offers a list of interpreter training programs provided by the Center for Health and Health Care in Schools.

<http://www.healthinschools.org/~media/Files/Presentations%20PPTs/MH%20Interpreter%20training%20final.ashx>

### **Personal Cultural Self-assessment**

This assessment helps individuals consider their views about multiculturalism in the United States. Some sample items include: "Are there diverse individuals in your neighborhood, school or workplace? Is there tolerance for different cultural practices, such as support for ethnic festivals?"

[www.selfhelpmagazine.com/articles/cultural/culture.html](http://www.selfhelpmagazine.com/articles/cultural/culture.html)

### **Provider Cultural Assessment**

This assessment is geared toward helping service providers and clinicians to think about their knowledge of culture and other diverse characteristics among their clients.

[www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/fatherhood/append\\_d.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/fatherhood/append_d.cfm)

### ***Cultural Competency: A Practical Guide for Mental Health Service Providers***

This free curriculum by Delia Saldaña, Ph.D. is available online and covers issues including communication, building rapport, involving families, confidentiality and effective outreach.

[www.hogg.utexas.edu](http://www.hogg.utexas.edu)

### **The "Who are You?" Quiz**

This quiz is used to teach about the process of assigning and identifying race, ethnicity and culture.

<http://anthro.palomar.edu/ethnicity/quizzes/ethquiz4.htm>

### **Self-reflection Picture Exercise**

This website provides pictures that allow users to reflect on assumptions people make based on appearance.

[www.gwu.edu](http://www.gwu.edu)

### **Project Implicit**

This website is used to help all individuals assess and understand their own attitudes, biases and stereotypes.

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit>

### ***A Guide to Cultural Competence in Community Mental Health***

This inexpensive web-based course supports peer-run programs, self-help groups and community providers in their efforts to develop or enhance cultural competency.

[www.cmhsrp.uic.edu/nrtc/webcourses.asp](http://www.cmhsrp.uic.edu/nrtc/webcourses.asp)

## Additional Readings

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Kim, H.S., Sherman, D.K. & Taylor, S.E. (2008). "Culture and Social Support," *American Psychologist*, 63, 518-526. This article is about social support and Asian and Asian American individuals.

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## Learn About Your Community Using U.S. Census Bureau Information

[http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en)

This website provides information about the kinds of people that live in communities across the United States. It presents data regarding race, gender, age, disability, immigration status and marital status. Data also are available on social, economic and housing characteristics for your community.

To find this information, go to the website and find the bar at the top of the page that reads "Fast Access to Information." In the text box below, enter the name of your city, town, county or zip code. Next, select your state from the drop down box below. Then, click on the box that says "Go." This will take you to a page that provides detailed information about your community. Demographic characteristics regarding race, ethnicity, gender and age are located at the bottom of the page. If you select the link that says "show more," the website will provide more specific information regarding age and ethnic features of people in your community.

The information available on this website is based on the American Community Survey. It reflects data collected over a three-year period for geographic areas with populations of 20,000 or more. If your community is smaller than 20,000 people, try searching for the town nearest to yours or for the county that you live in.







*“Let your star shine!”*



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