

Comprehensive Systems, Inc.

Cultural Diversity Plan

2016

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS, INC.
CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND
COMPETENCY PLAN

Adopted
November, 2013

Premise

Comprehensive Systems, Inc. has assessed the diversity amongst our consumer group. It has been determined that there is not a lot of diversity within our consumer base. However, there is some limited cultural diversity within this group of individuals. In order to be sensitive to each culture, we review cultural considerations at each consumer's Individual Program Plan. Additionally, to ensure that each person's culture is celebrated, this plan has been developed.

Cultural Awareness Program

Cultural Awareness requires us to first look at ourselves and become aware of our own cultural values, beliefs and perceptions. We not only look at our obvious culture identity, but, also consider age, gender, sexual orientation, spiritual beliefs, socioeconomic status and language. The plan's main focus is on our services and programs for children and adult, but also is considered for application to staff and other stakeholders.

Why do we do things in that way? How do we see the world? Why do we react in that particular way?

Cultural awareness becomes central when we interact with people from other cultures. Everyone sees, interprets and evaluates things in different ways. What is considered as appropriate behavior in one culture may be seen as inappropriate in another. Misunderstandings arise when "I" use "my" meanings to make sense of "your" reality. What does it mean? For example, in the United States, looking someone straight in the face is a sign of honesty, while a straight look into the face is regarded as disrespectful in Japan. Becoming aware of our cultural dynamics is a difficult task because we may not be consciously aware of it. Since we were born, we have learned to do things at an unconscious level. Our experiences, our values and our cultural background lead us to see and do things in a certain way. Sometimes we have to step outside of our cultural boundaries in order to realize the impact that our culture has on our behavior. Projected similarities could lead to misinterpretation as well. If we project similarities where there are not, we might act inappropriately. It is safer to assume cultural differences until similarity is proven.

Degrees of Cultural Awareness

There are several levels of cultural awareness that reflect how people grow to perceive cultural differences.

- A. **My way is the only way** – At this first level, people are aware of their way of doing things. They see their way as the only way. At this stage, they ignore the impact of cultural differences.
- B. **I know their way, but mine is better** – At the second level, people are aware of other ways of doing things, but still consider their way as the best one. In this stage, cultural differences are perceived as the source of problems and people tend to ignore them or reduce their significance.
- C. **My Way and their Way** – At this level, people are aware of their own way of doing things and others' ways of doing things, and they choose the best way according to the situation. At this stage, people realize that cultural differences can lead both to problems and benefits and they are willing to use cultural diversity to create new solutions and alternatives.
- D. **Our Way** – The fourth stage brings people from different cultural backgrounds together for the creation of a culture of a shared meaning. People dialogue repeatedly with others, create new meanings, new rules to meet the needs of a particular situation.

Increasing cultural awareness means seeing both the positive and negative aspects of cultural differences. Cultural diversity could be a source of problems, in particular when the organization needs people to think or act in a similar way. Diversity increases the level of complexity and confusion and makes agreement difficult to reach. On the other hand, cultural diversity becomes an advantage when the organization expands its solutions and its sense of identity, and begins to take different approaches to problem solving. Diversity, in this sense, creates valuable new skills and behaviors. In becoming culturally aware, people realize that:

- We are not all the same
- Similarities and differences are both important

- There are multiple ways to reach the same goal and live life
- The best way depends on the cultural contingency. Each situation is different and may require a different solution.

How Do I Manage Cultural Diversity?

We are generally aware that the first step in managing diversity is to recognize it and learn not to fear it. Since everyone is the product of their own culture, we need to increase both self-awareness and cross-cultural awareness. There is no book of instructions that guides us in how to deal with cultural diversity. But certain attitudes help to bridge cultures.

- Admit that you don't know.** Knowing that we don't know everything. Assume differences, not similarities.
- Suspend judgments.** Collect as much information as possible so you can describe the situation accurately before evaluating it.
- Empathy.** In order to understand another person, we need to try standing in his/her shoes. Through empathy, we discover how other people would like to be treated by us.
- Systematically check your assumptions.** Ask your colleagues for feedback and constantly check your assumptions to make sure you clearly understand the situation.
- Become comfortable with uncertainty.** The more complicated and uncertain life is, the more we tend to seek control. Assume that other people are as resourceful as we are and that their way will add to what we know. "If we always do what we have always done, we will always get what we have always gotten."

Embrace diversity. As an organization, we will find ways of sharing culture and accepting our diverse participant base as well as our workforce, our other services and programs along with the needs of all.

The Plan

There are three phases to our plan, the details are listed below.

Phase I: Awareness

Goal 1. Assure all staff members understand the cultural backgrounds of the staff and the consumers that we serve in each area and also take into account any cultural considerations that need to be taken into consideration for other stakeholders, such as the community.

Consumer Activities:

- *Any special cultural considerations including age, gender, sexual orientation, spiritual beliefs, socioeconomic status, and language will be documented in each consumer's admissions notes and annual staffing minutes.
- *During staff meetings, discuss the culture of the consumers and their desired wants/needs.
- *During consumer meetings, staff and consumers will discuss any cultural activities happening in the community or any activities they would like to plan in-house.
- *Staff will identify, and as needed, accompany consumers to culture related events.
- *Staff will be encouraged to become educated through the participant of any particular values or cultural customs.

Staff Activities:

After an applicant has been chosen for hire, they will have the opportunity to give data regarding their cultural background, including but not limited to culture, age, gender, sexual orientation, spiritual beliefs,

socioeconomic status, and language background that would be helpful for managers and staff to know in working with that individual.

Other Stakeholder Activities:

Annually, community demographics will be reviewed for relevance.

Goal 2. Comprehensive Systems will assure each consumer, family member, and staff members alike that their individual cultural background is of importance to our organization.

Consumer Activities:

*All staff should welcome any new culture and assist with advocating for consumers and introduce their culture to the situation as appropriate. It may be employment, recreation, community, or other situations.

*Consumer or family members select the life situations they wish, such as church or other community events, doctors, hairstylists, etc.

*Discuss with the support staff the different types of foods that people from different ethnic backgrounds may like, including the way meals may be prepared. Allow and encourage consumers to choose clothing that represent their culture as they choose.

Staff Activities:

*Managers will train consumers and staff on any special cultural considerations that need to be made for any consumer or staff member.

Phase II: Sensitivity

Goal 1. Assure consumers and staff feels comfortable and respected by staff, despite their cultural beliefs and/or differences. We will evaluate the needs of other stakeholders in each community based on the community demographics.

Consumer Activities:

*Train consumers how to adjust (if needed) to and special cultural considerations for each consumer and staff member.

*Staff should support and encourage consumers to remain active in their culture and refrain from pressuring the client to change their place of worship, style of dress, type of foods preferred, etc.

*Managers will be aware and train consumers as needed on any specific cultural considerations that need to be made for staff or consumers.

Staff Activities:

*Train staff how to adjust (if needed) to and special cultural considerations for each consumer and staff member.

*Managers will be aware and train staff as needed on any specific cultural considerations that need to be made for staff or consumers.

Other Stakeholder Activities:

*We will evaluate the changing demographic of the communities in which we operate and make changes, as needed, in our program areas to reflect the changing needs of the community and other stakeholders.

Phase III: Competence

Goal 1: Develop and promote cultural competence through education and training.

Consumer Based Activities:

Consumer's demonstrate competency by respecting the culture of each staff and consumer.

Staff Based Activities:

*Staff receive training according to each consumer's cultural background and any specific considerations that need to be made. Cultural Competency training will be completed at Orientation.

*A Cultural Competency self-assessment will be completed annually by all staff regarding promoting cultural diversity.

Area Managers will review the cultural competence plan annually with staff.

Other Stakeholder Activities:

*We will evaluate the changing demographic of the communities in which we operate and make changes, as needed, in our program areas to reflect the changing needs of the community and other stakeholders.

We will collect data every three years and review this plan annually.

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