

Culturally Competent Care

For Medical Providers



Project Overview

Individual health care is a vital part of personal and community wellness. Health care facilities are physical spaces where individuals, particularly vulnerable individuals, may make life-impacting decisions that are not always easy. In addition to providing technical medical care, it is crucial for medical care providers to also provide culturally competent care that comes from a place of mercy and compassion.

Sexual and reproductive healthcare entails deeply sensitive topics of family planning and sexual fulfillment. This means it is particularly important for medical providers to play supportive and empowering roles for individuals seeking care related to an abortion, fertility treatment, menopause, sexual dysfunction, and other potential medical issues.

Understanding and implementing culturally competent care practices requires continual learning, especially through centering the lived experiences of patients. Here are some tips to keep in mind as you strive to be a more culturally competent medical care provider.

#1: Listen with a willingness to learn

Actively listen to your patient as they talk about the problem(s) they're facing and the solution(s) they're seeking. When providing medical advice, ask follow up questions, such as *do you have any reservations about this type of medical solution?* Or *What additional information do you need in order to feel equipped to make a decision about this medical solution?* Most importantly, remain cognizant of any implicit bias you may have by reflecting upon how you may interpret the same exact situation or medical problem with a patient who is of a different race/gender/sexuality/religion.

#2: Provide a variety of options

As a general practice, a good medical care provider should offer all available options to a patient. It is important to present medical advice in an open manner. For example, you may tell your patient that some patients have preferred this method of treatment, but that doesn't mean that's the route you have to take. Keeping options open in this way allows patients the space to share their decision-making process and also collapses some of the hierarchy implicit in health care spaces.

#3: Practice trauma-informed care

Trauma-informed care requires centering the needs and experiences of the patient to inform a holistic approach to care. While providers have a very specific goal of providing their technical expertise, a trauma-informed approach requires the provider to act with compassion. This requires being reflective of *the* patient's experiences, safety planning with the patient, and being collaborative in this process.

#4: Hold Oneself Accountable

Even with the best intentions, there may be a situation where the medical provider makes a cultural assumption or makes comments that may offend the patient. In these situations, it is best to hold oneself accountable, understand the mistake, apologize, and have a self-reflection process to understand why this assumption/comment was made and how to avoid a similar situation in the future.

Ultimately, it is important to recognize cultural competence as an indispensable component of quality and ethical health care.

- [Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center](#)
- [Duke Center for Personalized Health Care](#)
- [American Medical Association](#)