



## Cultural Competency Tipsheet

### Tips for Improving Services and Satisfaction for Your Diverse Patient Population

#### **Are your actions and words compatible with your patients' health beliefs, practices and languages?**

- ✓ Cultural beliefs, experiences & traditional healing systems affect patients' health practices & interactions. Help your patients feel comfortable discussing these cultural beliefs & practices. Take these into account when making diagnoses & offering treatment options.
- ✓ Communicate with patients in their preferred language; use materials that are in the languages your patients speak; & confirm that they understand all verbal and written communications.

#### **Does your office staff reflect your patient population?**

- ✓ Contact mentoring programs, partner with local schools & employment programs, & advertise in ethnic publications to recruit staff members from the ethnic communities you serve.
- ✓ Build on the experience, knowledge, and skills of your culturally diverse staff to meet the needs of your diverse patient population.

#### **Do you offer all staff members regular opportunities to participate in trainings on cultural and linguistic competence?**

- ✓ Provide opportunities for staff to attend trainings on topics addressing language access, effects of culture on health behavior & treatment compliance, & the impacts of racism on health access & behavior.
- ✓ Consider free and low cost trainings offered by local health departments, pharmaceutical companies, health plans, and non-profit agencies, as well as web-based trainings & teleconferences.

#### **Does your office provide patient registration forms and education materials that are easy to read and understand?**

- ✓ Provide low-literacy materials including questionnaires, consent forms, reading materials, educational materials, and treatment instructions in the languages your patients speak.

#### **Does your office offer language assistance services for patients with limited English language skills?**

- ✓ Don't rely on patients' family members to interpret. Communicate with patients in their preferred language by using bilingual staff or telephone interpreter services.
- ✓ Inform patients, in their own language, that they have a right to receive interpretation services.

**The strength of our society is its cultural diversity. Cultural diversity should be embraced, not regarded as a burden.**

## Communication Tips

- Explore etiquette issues for cultures you serve. Learn the customary form of greeting individuals and polite forms of address.
- Be sensitive to cultural norms regarding touching and personal space.
- Listen with interest and remain non-judgmental. Ask patients whether you understood them correctly.
- Learn several key phrases in the languages spoken in your practice to show respect and establish rapport.
- Ask patients whether they are using complementary or folk remedies.
- Remember that there is diversity within cultures, observe your patients' communication style, and learn how individual patients wish to be treated.

## RESOURCES

### Books

**Culture & Nursing Care: A Pocket Guide**, edited by Juliene G. Lipson, Suzanne L. Dibble, and Pamela A. Minarik, School of Nursing, University of California, San Francisco, UCSF Nursing Press, 2003. \$22. **Order online at <http://nurseweb.ucsf.edu/www/book4.htm> or call 415-476-4992.**

**Developing Cross-Cultural Competence: A Guide for Working with Children and Their Families**, edited by Eleanor W. Lynch and Marci J. Hanson, third edition, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2004. \$44.95. **Order online at [www.brookespublishing.com](http://www.brookespublishing.com).**

**Spanish for Pediatric Medicine: A Practical Communication Guide**, by Edward Machtinger, MD and Peter Andrija Nigrovic, MD; American Academy of Pediatrics, revised 2003. \$34.95 for AAFP non-members. **Order online at [www.aafp.org/catalog](http://www.aafp.org/catalog) or call 1-800-944-0000.**

**Zip Code Databook for Service Planning Areas**, United Way of Greater Los Angeles, revised 2003. \$30 for a hard copy book; \$20 for a CD. **Order online at [www.unitedwayla.org](http://www.unitedwayla.org) or call 213-630-2818.**

### Interpreter and Translation Services

**AT&T Language Assistance Services.** Connects to a variety of language assistance programs, such as translation services and "in language" operators. For pricing & additional information call 800-752-0093, option #9.

### Other Resources

**Cross Cultural Health Care Program (CCHCP).** [www.xculture.org](http://www.xculture.org) CCHCP serves as a bridge between communities and health care institutions to ensure full access to culturally and linguistically appropriate health care.

**Immunization Action Coalition.** [www.immunize.org](http://www.immunize.org) Free immunization educational materials in multiple languages.

**LA Care Health Plan.** [www.lacare.org](http://www.lacare.org) The provider section of the website contains free downloadable consent forms and health information handouts in diverse languages including Spanish, Chinese and Korean. Materials are appropriate for use by LA Care Health Plan Providers, as well as non-contracted providers.

**Los Angeles County Department of Health Services: Cultural and Linguistic Competency Standards.** [www.dhs.co.la.ca.us/odp/docs/dhsculturalstds.pdf](http://www.dhs.co.la.ca.us/odp/docs/dhsculturalstds.pdf)

**The Office of Minority Health-Public Health Services.** [www.omhrc.gov](http://www.omhrc.gov) Overview of the "National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Health Care Services".

**United Way of Greater Los Angeles.** [www.unitedwayla.org](http://www.unitedwayla.org) Ethnic profiles & community reports for L.A.

### References

- Provision of Culturally Competent Health Care. Amy V. Blue, Ph.D. Medical University of South Carolina College of Medicine. 2000
- National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care. Final Report. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, OPHS, Office of Minority Health. March 2001. Washington, D.C.
- A Practical Guide for Implementing the Recommended National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services Health Care. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, OPHS, Office of Minority Health. March 2001. Washington, D.C. Caring for patients in a multicultural society. Buchwald D, Caralis PV, Gany F, et al. Patient Care 1994 June 15;28(11):105-23