



# Health Equity, Cultural Competency, and Bias

## 2026 Provider Training



# Training Goals

- ✓ To support practitioners and providers in meeting population health goals by understanding health equity, cultural competency, and bias
- ✓ Increase awareness of personal and subconscious biases
- ✓ Identify potential barriers to care
- ✓ Improve intercultural communication skills
- ✓ Improve Cultural Competence to reduce health disparities



# What is Health Equity?

**Health equity** is the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health.

- Achieving this requires focused and ongoing societal efforts to address historical and contemporary injustices; overcome economic, social, and other obstacles to health and healthcare; and eliminate preventable health disparities.
- Achieving health equity also requires addressing social determinants of health and health disparities. It involves acknowledging and addressing racism as a threat to public health and the history of unethical practices in public health that lead to inequitable health outcomes.



# What is Cultural Competency?

**Cultural competency** is the ability of systems to provide care to patients with varied values, beliefs and behaviors, including the tailoring of health care delivery to meet patients' social, cultural and linguistic needs.

- **Cultural Sensitivity** is being aware that cultural differences and similarities between people exist without assigning them a value – positive or negative, better or worse, right or wrong. It begins with a recognition that there are differences between cultures. These differences are reflected in the ways that different groups communicate and relate to one another. It is more than an awareness that there are differences in culture to interact effectively.
- A culturally competent health care system can help improve health outcomes and quality of care and can contribute to the elimination of racial and ethnic health disparities.
- The **four C's** (Culture, Communication, Cooperation, and Competence) can reduce miscommunication in healthcare by promoting cultural sensitivity, effective communication, collaboration, and understanding of patients' needs.



# What is Cultural Awareness?

**Cultural awareness** is the deliberate, cognitive process in which health care providers become appreciative and sensitive to the values, beliefs, lifeways, practices, and problem-solving strategies of people's culture.

- This awareness process must involve examination of one's own prejudices and biases toward other cultures and exploration of one's own cultural background.
- Recognizing differences among cultures is important, but we should also be aware that differences also exist within cultures.
- The assumption that a common culture is shared by all members of a racial, linguistic, or religious group is erroneous.
- Realize that, like it or not, we most likely hold some stereotypes about culture, religion, language, and gender.
- We should identify any prejudices and stereotypes that prevent us from communicating effectively with people from different cultures.



# What is bias?

The word “**bias**” refers to a negative or positive idea a person has about someone or something. A person’s bias can affect how they interact with people of certain groups.

- An **implicit bias** is a bias that a person is unaware of. A person who has an implicit bias may believe they treat everyone equally.
  - However, the person’s implicit bias may cause unconscious negative associations toward certain groups of people.
- Biases in healthcare may be related to:
  - Sexual Identity
  - Sex and Gender
  - Education
  - Socioeconomic status
  - Ableism, Age
  - Overweight and Obesity
  - Racial Bias
  - Geographic Location



Healthcare professionals need to be aware of any implicit biases they may have and work to remove them.



# What is bias? (Cont.)

- It is important that all people have access to the same levels of healthcare.
- Bias in healthcare can lead to lower quality healthcare among people from certain groups.
  - Reductions in healthcare can cause these groups to receive incorrect diagnoses, experience delays in treatment, or avoid treatment altogether.
- **Techniques that can help reduce bias in healthcare include:**
  - More education on health disparities
  - Positive and frequent intergroup contact with different patient groups
  - Providing patients with a list of questions to ask regarding their condition, which can lead to extended
  - and more in-depth conversations with their healthcare professionals
  - An awareness of the additional needs of patients with disabilities, such as braille on signs



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