
Certificate Programme in Cultural Competency for Refugee and Immigrant Populations

Language and Communication

A

Acculturation: The process by which individuals or groups adapt to the cultural norms and practices of a new or host society. This process involves changes in behaviors, beliefs, values, and identity to fit the new cultural context. Acculturation can be voluntary or forced, and it can impact various aspects of an individual's life, including language use, communication styles, and social interactions.

Assimilation: A process through which individuals or groups adopt the cultural norms, values, and practices of the dominant or host society while relinquishing their own cultural identity. Assimilation often involves giving up aspects of one's culture to conform to the norms of the dominant culture. This process can lead to the loss of language, traditions, and customs, as individuals strive to become part of the mainstream society.

B

Biculturalism: The ability of individuals to navigate and function effectively in two or more different cultures. Bicultural individuals are able to switch between cultural contexts, behaviors, and communication styles depending on the situation. Biculturalism involves maintaining a connection to one's cultural heritage while also adapting to the norms of a new or dominant culture.

C

Cultural Competency: The ability to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. Cultural competency involves understanding, respecting, and valuing the differences in beliefs, practices, and values of diverse cultural groups. It also involves adapting communication styles, behaviors, and practices to be inclusive and respectful of cultural diversity.

Cultural Humility: A lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique in order to understand and respect the beliefs, practices, and values of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Cultural humility involves recognizing one's own biases, assumptions, and limitations when interacting with people from different cultures. It also involves a willingness to learn from others and to continually strive for cultural competence.

Cultural Sensitivity: The awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the cultural differences and similarities between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Cultural sensitivity involves recognizing and respecting the unique beliefs, values, and practices of different cultural groups. It also involves being mindful of how cultural factors can influence communication, behaviors, and relationships.

D

Discrimination: The unfair treatment or negative attitudes towards individuals or groups based on their perceived differences, such as race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality. Discrimination can manifest in various forms, including verbal abuse, exclusion, prejudice, and stereotypes. It can have a significant impact on an individual's well-being, self-esteem, and sense of belonging.

E

Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of others. Empathy involves putting oneself in another person's shoes and seeing the world from their perspective. It is an essential skill for effective communication, as it allows individuals to connect emotionally with others and build trusting relationships.

Ethnocentrism: The belief that one's own cultural group is superior to others and that its customs, beliefs, and values are the "right" way of doing things. Ethnocentrism can lead to prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes towards individuals from different cultural backgrounds. It hinders cross-cultural understanding and communication by promoting a sense of cultural superiority.

F

Family Reunification: The process of reuniting family members who have been separated due to migration, conflict, or other reasons. Family reunification is a key component of refugee resettlement and immigration policies, as it helps to maintain family ties, support networks, and cultural connections. It is an important factor in the successful integration and adjustment of refugees and immigrants in a new country.

G

Gender Roles: The socially constructed expectations, behaviors, and responsibilities that society assigns to individuals based on their perceived gender. Gender roles vary across cultures and can influence how individuals communicate, interact, and express themselves. Challenging traditional gender roles can be a source of cultural conflict and may require sensitivity and understanding when working with diverse populations.

H

Heritage Language: The language that is passed down from generation to generation within a family or cultural group. Heritage languages are often spoken at home or in community settings and play a vital role in preserving cultural identity and heritage. Maintaining and promoting heritage languages can help individuals stay connected to their cultural roots and communicate with family members and community members.

I

Interpreter: A trained professional who facilitates communication between individuals who do not speak the same language. Interpreters convey spoken messages accurately and impartially in real-time, ensuring that all parties understand each other. Interpreters play a crucial role in healthcare settings, legal proceedings, social services, and other situations where language barriers may hinder effective communication.

Integration: The process by which individuals or groups become fully immersed and participate in the social, economic, and cultural life of a new society. Integration involves adapting to the norms, practices, and values of the host society while also maintaining aspects of one's cultural identity. Successful integration requires access to education, employment, healthcare, and social support systems.

J

Justice System: The system of laws, courts, and legal processes that are used to administer justice and uphold the rule of law in a society. The justice system plays a critical role in ensuring fairness, equality, and accountability for individuals who have been accused of crimes or who seek legal redress. Access to a fair and impartial justice system is essential for protecting the rights and liberties of all individuals, including refugees and immigrants.

K

Knowledge Translation: The process of translating research findings, evidence-based practices, and knowledge into practical and accessible information that can be used by policymakers, practitioners, and the public. Knowledge translation aims to bridge the gap between research and practice by making research findings relevant, understandable, and usable in real-world settings. It is an essential component of evidence-informed decision-making and policy development in the field of cultural competency.

L

Language Barrier: The inability to communicate effectively due to differences in language proficiency, fluency, or understanding. Language barriers can hinder interactions, create misunderstandings, and impede access to services for individuals who do not speak the dominant language. Overcoming language barriers requires the use of interpreters, translators, visual aids, and other communication strategies to ensure that all parties can understand and be understood.

M

Migration: The movement of individuals or groups from one place to another in search of better economic, social, or political opportunities. Migration can be voluntary or forced and can be temporary or permanent. It can have a significant impact on individuals' lives, families, communities, and cultures. Understanding the reasons for migration and its impact on individuals and societies is essential for providing culturally competent services to refugees and immigrants.

N

Nonverbal Communication: The transmission of messages, emotions, and meanings through gestures, facial expressions, body language, and other nonverbal cues. Nonverbal communication plays a crucial role in interpersonal interactions, as it can convey emotions, attitudes, and intentions more effectively than words alone. Understanding nonverbal communication cues is essential for effective cross-cultural communication, as different cultures may interpret nonverbal behaviors differently.

O

Oral Tradition: The transmission of cultural knowledge, stories, history, and practices through spoken language from one generation to another. Oral traditions are an important part of many cultures and play a vital role in preserving cultural heritage, identity, and values. Oral traditions can include folk tales, myths, legends, songs, proverbs, and other forms of storytelling that convey cultural knowledge and wisdom.

P

Prejudice: Preconceived opinions, attitudes, or beliefs about individuals or groups based on stereotypes, misconceptions, or biases. Prejudice can lead to discrimination, exclusion, and unfair treatment of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Overcoming prejudice requires self-awareness, empathy, and education to challenge stereotypes and promote understanding and respect for cultural diversity.

Q

Qualitative Research: A research method that explores and interprets social phenomena, behaviors, and experiences through in-depth interviews, observations, and analysis of textual data. Qualitative research aims to understand the meanings, perspectives, and contexts that shape individuals' beliefs, practices, and behaviors. It provides valuable insights into the lived experiences of diverse cultural groups and can inform culturally responsive practices and interventions.

R

Refugee: An individual who has been forced to flee their home country due to persecution, war, violence, or other threats to their safety and well-being. Refugees seek protection in another country and are recognized under international law as having a well-founded fear of persecution. Refugees often face significant challenges in adapting to a new culture, language, and environment, and may require specialized support to rebuild their lives.

S

Stereotype: A fixed, oversimplified, and often negative belief or idea about a particular group of people based on their perceived characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, or nationality. Stereotypes can lead to prejudice, discrimination, and stigma towards individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Challenging stereotypes and promoting cultural awareness can help to combat bias and promote understanding and respect for cultural diversity.

T

Translation: The process of converting written or spoken content from one language to another while preserving the original meaning, style, and intent of the message. Translation is essential for ensuring effective communication between individuals who speak different languages. Professional translators use linguistic and cultural knowledge to accurately convey messages, documents, and information in a culturally appropriate and contextually sensitive manner.

U

Unconscious Bias: Implicit attitudes, stereotypes, and beliefs that influence our perceptions, behaviors, and decisions without our awareness. Unconscious bias can shape how we interact with others, interpret information, and make judgments about people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Increasing awareness of unconscious bias and its impact on communication and relationships is essential for promoting cultural competence and inclusive practices.

V

Verbal Communication: The use of spoken or written words to convey messages, ideas, and information between individuals. Verbal communication is a fundamental aspect of human interaction and plays a vital role in expressing thoughts, emotions, and intentions. Effective verbal communication involves clarity, active listening, feedback, and cultural sensitivity to ensure that messages are understood and interpreted correctly across diverse cultural contexts.

W

Worldview: A set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that shape how individuals perceive the world, make sense of their experiences, and interact with others. Worldviews are influenced by culture, religion, education, and life experiences and can vary widely across different cultural groups. Understanding and respecting diverse worldviews is essential for effective cross-cultural communication, as it helps to bridge cultural differences and promote mutual understanding and respect.

X

Xenophobia: The fear, prejudice, or hostility towards individuals or groups perceived as foreign, different, or unfamiliar. Xenophobia can manifest in attitudes, behaviors, and policies that discriminate against immigrants, refugees, or other marginalized groups. Overcoming xenophobia requires education, awareness, and advocacy to promote tolerance, inclusivity, and respect for cultural diversity in society.

Y

Yin and Yang: A concept from Chinese philosophy that represents the dualistic nature of the universe, where opposing forces are interconnected and interdependent. Yin symbolizes darkness, passivity, and femininity,

while Yang represents light, activity, and masculinity. The balance and harmony between Yin and Yang are believed to bring about health, prosperity, and well-being. Understanding the concept of Yin and Yang can help individuals appreciate the interconnectedness of opposites and the cyclical nature of life.

Z

Zigzag Model of Acculturation: A theoretical framework that describes the dynamic and nonlinear process of cultural adaptation and identity formation among immigrants and refugees. The Zigzag Model of Acculturation recognizes that individuals may move back and forth between their cultural heritage and the dominant culture as they navigate the challenges of acculturation. This model emphasizes the complexity and variability of the acculturation process and underscores the importance of cultural flexibility, resilience, and self-awareness in adapting to a new cultural context.