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Developmental Disabilities Institute

Establishing and Maintaining Collaborative Relationships When Working with Latino Families

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Children attending the 3rd Annual Picnic for Latino Families hosted by DDI.



Trainings were held during the summer months at Springdale Park to accommodate children being out of school.

Cultural Competence

Is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals which enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. Cultural competence emphasizes the idea of *effectively* operating in different cultural contexts.

How Does Cultural Competence Pertain to services that agencies offer?

Families reported that some agencies:

- Employ people who do not seem to be trained in working with families of children with disabilities or people with disabilities.
- Do not have people who are bilingual and/or culturally sensitive to the Latino population.
- Do not accept children with disabilities in the programs they offer.

Developmental Disabilities Institute

Mission Statement

To contribute to the development of inclusive communities and quality of life of people with disabilities and their families through a culturally sensitive statewide program of interdisciplinary education, community support and services, research and dissemination of information.

Through its project sites, the Developmental Disabilities Institute (DDI) provides support statewide to more than 12,000 persons with disabilities, family members and professionals to develop innovative strategies for meeting the needs of diverse communities.

The purpose of this publication is to assist agencies, schools and organizations that work with culturally diverse families, with effective and appropriate strategies to engage and retain those families. A focus group with Hispanic/Latino families who have children with developmental disabilities provided insights to barriers and challenges for them to accessing the services and supports they need to achieve optimum life outcomes for their children and families.

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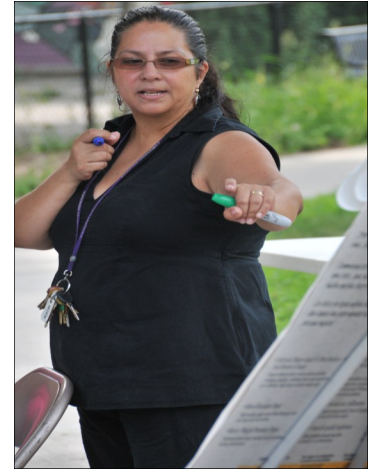
Cultural Relativism

Refers to the idea that behavior in a particular culture should not be judged by the standards of another culture.

Why Cultural Relativism can be detrimental in engaging families?

Families report:

That when they take their children to agencies in the community to receive services and those agencies expect the family to leave their cultural beliefs, language, and heritage backgrounds behind, families feel stripped of their identity and culture. They do not feel welcomed and often times do not return for services.



Julia Hernandez facilitates summer, bi-weekly support groups and training meetings with Latino Families in Southwest Detroit.

Barriers for Agencies

- Not valuing diversity.
- Resistance to respond to changes in ethnic demographics due to variations in migration.
- Lack of organizational changes at the administrative level.
- Little or no participation from diverse groups in Boards or committees.

According to the National Center for Cultural Competence at Georgetown University, some reasons for the need for agency change are:

- Decrease liability and malpractice lawsuits
- Eliminate long standing disparities
- Meet Legislative, regulatory and accreditation mandates
- Gain a competitive edge in the market place
- Respond to current and projected demographic changes in the United States



While their parents are attending the summer trainings these siblings enjoy the bike path, that circles the park, where meetings are conducted.



Effective Strategies to Engage Hispanic/Latino Families

Summary and Recommendations

The Latino family focus groups in Detroit revealed that families don't want to pursue services from agencies that ignore their cultural heritage. This is evident to them when the agency doesn't have translators, information is in English only and the office setting does not reflect diversity; from the art work to the employees. Even when families do receive literature in Spanish they may find the translation to be confusing, too wordy and difficult to understand. A welcoming environment begins with the first person that meets the individual. When staff do not consider a family's culture and impose their own values on the family, misinterpretation of behaviors can create unnecessary problems. For example, in the Hispanic culture some children do not generally have scheduled bed times. When staff are unaware of a culture's accepted childrearing habits they may think the parents are permissive and misinterpret their intentions for a lack of parenting skills. Agencies and organizations that provide services in an especially culturally diverse area will want to be prepared to meet the needs of the residents within that community. Agencies should utilize experienced translators and avoid internet based translation tools that can result in inappropriate translation of certain words.

Listed below are more strategies to make culturally diverse families feel welcomed:

- Receptionist should reflect the diversity of the region the agency serves
- Artwork should include culturally diverse children and adults
- Literature should be reviewed by a content expert prior to dissemination
- Informational literature should be available in Spanish
- Ideally some staff should speak Spanish
- Staff should know who to engage in the family
- All staff should understand and respect Hispanic culture
- Website information should also be available in Spanish
- All employees should take the time to learn about other cultures
- Libraries and community based organizations and websites can be useful when increasing knowledge about cultures
- Network with other agencies that recognize culture within the community

In summary, service delivery should enhance a sense of community and supports within the community. Service delivery should also be matched to the family's values, cultural background and preferences. Recognizing a family's unique strengths and how to mobilize and build on those strengths is key to the agency and the family in achieving success.

Resources

Cross, T., Bazron, B. Dennis, K., & Isaacs, M. (1989). Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care, Volume I. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center / National Center for Cultural Competence website from Georgetown.

Goldstein, S. (2000). Cross-Cultural Explorations: Activities in Culture and Psychology. Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.

Hanson, M.J., & Lynch, E.W. (2007). Understanding Families; Approaches to Diversity, Disability, and Risk. Baltimore, Maryland: Brookes.

Developmental Disabilities Institute. (2010). Family Support Navigator Academy (1st & 2nd ed.) [manual]. Detroit, Michigan: Developmental Disabilities Institute.



Picture of Summer 2011 Training, Julia receiving help.



Several school supplies are used for families to take notes. Including high-lighters, markers, pens, pencils and paper.



Urban Neighborhood Director welcomes families to the Springdale Park

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