INFUSING CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE INTO THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF HOME VISITORS

A Resource for MIECHV Awardees

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About the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV)

The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) supports voluntary, evidence-based home visiting services for at-risk pregnant women and parents with young children up to kindergarten entry. The MIECHV Program builds upon decades of scientific research showing that home visits by a nurse, social worker, early childhood educator, or other trained professional during pregnancy and, in the first years of a child's life, improves the lives of en and families by preventing child abuse and neglect, supporting positive parenting, improving maternal and child health, and promoting child development and school readiness. States, territories, and tribal entities receive funding through the MIECHV Program, and have the flexibility to select home visiting service delivery models that best meet state and local needs. The MIECHV Program is administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in partnership with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

Infusing Cultural and Linguistic Competence into the Recruitment and Retention of Home Visitors

Introduction

The term cultural competence is used to describe culturally and linguistically appropriate services that are respectful of and responsive to the beliefs, practices, and needs of diverse people. "Cultural and linguistic competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations." Home visiting leaders, administrators, and managers at the awardee level can support and foster cultural competence both in their own organizations and among their Local Implementing Agencies (LIAs).

Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS) is a way to improve the quality of services provided to all individuals, which will ultimately help reduce health disparities and achieve health equity. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health has developed a set of national CLAS standards to improve health care quality and advance health equity by establishing a framework for organizations to serve the nation's increasingly diverse communities.

This Reflection and Planning Tool supports CLAS Standard 10: "Conduct ongoing assessments of the organization's CLAS-related activities and integrate CLAS-related measures into assessment measurement and continuous quality improvement activities." The tool also ties especially closely to the following CLAS standards related to Governance, Leadership, and Workforce:

> **CLAS Standard 2:** Advance and sustain organizational governance and leadership that promotes CLAS and health equity through policy, practices, and allocated resources.

> **CLAS Standard 3:** Recruit, promote, and support a culturally and linguistically diverse governance, leadership, and workforce that are responsive to the population in the service area.

> **CLAS Standard 4:** Educate and train governance, leadership, and workforce in culturally and linguistically appropriate policies and practices on an ongoing basis.

Culturally competent organizations create an atmosphere of respect and caring that permeates the entire organization. Becoming a culturally competent organization requires leadership, buy-in, self-knowledge, and intentionality. While it doesn't happen overnight, building an organization where people feel supported and valued and that their work has purpose and meaning is well worth the time and effort. Organizations benefit, staff benefit, the community benefits—but most of all, families and children are so much better served when an organization is culturally competent.

This Reflection and Planning Tool focuses on infusing cultural competence into the recruitment and retention of home visitors, which is especially important because of the close link between staff retention and family retention. This tool is appropriate for use by both awardees and LIAs. It provides system-level strategies that both groups can use to identify where they are now and to plan next steps.

How to Use This Tool

- Convene a team that represents the leadership, management, practice, and stakeholder/community levels of the awardee or LIA. Think about the composition of your team. Is everyone at the table who should be there? Does the team membership model diversity?

- Consider whether to use an internal or external facilitator for the reflection and planning process.

- Invite team members to complete this Reflection and Planning Tool together. Share and discuss the national CLAS standards with the team prior to completing this tool to provide context and a framework for your work. Remember to use this process to model culturally responsive engagement by seeking input and making space for divergent perspectives.

- Distribute the planning tool to team members, and review the purpose of the tool with the team.

- Describe how the tool is organized and used:

  - There are four major sections: overall organizational strategies; recruitment strategies; onboarding, orientation, and ongoing professional development strategies; and retention strategies.

  - The team rates the degree to which the program has implemented the strategies in each section, checking the appropriate column: "Not Yet," "Somewhat," "Mostly," or "Fully." (The related CLAS standards for each strategy are noted in parentheses.)

  - The team discusses next steps and develops an action plan.

- Decide on the best way for your organization to use the tool:

  - Option 1: Each team member completes the tool individually; the team then meets to share individual ratings and come to consensus regarding the current status of each strategy for the organization.

  - Option 2: The entire team reviews and rates the implementation status of each strategy as a group.

  - Option 3: Individual team members take the lead for rating a particular section of the tool.

  - Option 4: The entire staff is invited to complete the tool anonymously. The leadership team then uses the staff's input to inform decisions about how well each strategy is currently being implemented.

Strategy	Not Yet	Some-what	Mostly	Fully	Comments/Next Steps
Rate the degree to which your program has implemented each strategy. The numbers in parentheses after each strategy refer to the related CLAS standard.					
Overall Organizational Strategies					
1. Develop and implement organizational policies and procedures that promote staff diversity at all levels of the organization. For example, develop a broad definition of diversity across the organization, have a diversity and inclusion policy, establish an active diversity committee, and provide resources to support all members of your organization. (2, 4)					
2. Monitor staff composition to reflect the diversity of the families and communities being served. (3)					
3. Build a multicultural workforce at all levels of the organization. (3)					
4. Develop policies to hire and retain underrepresented, underserved, and marginalized cultural groups in the community. (9)					
5. Map language needs in the community to plan appropriately for the recruitment of bilingual staff. (7)					
6. Support partner organizations in developing human resources policies and procedures that promote diversity and inclusion. (13)					
7. Ensure that compensation is equitable, based on staff qualifications and performance. (2)					

Strategy	Not Yet	Some-what	Mostly	Fully	Comments/Next Steps
8. Promote and maintain cultural and linguistic competence knowledge and skills for all staff through ongoing, frequent professional development activities. (4)					
Recruitment Strategies					
9. Implement organizational selection and hiring processes that support equity. (3) For example: • Include community members, families, and other stakeholders in hiring for key positions in the organization • Ask current employees and community organizations for staff referrals • Increase your outreach efforts to make sure that you have a diverse pool of applicants • Conduct blind screenings of resumes and applications to minimize implicit bias in the hiring process					
10. Provide linguistically appropriate services by recruiting multilingual staff who are qualified to perform their work tasks in the indicated language(s). (3, 5-8)					
11. Announce job openings through a variety of media formats and modalities; ensure widest dissemination in the multicultural communities being served. (3)					
12. Develop and implement an application and interview process that includes questions that capture personal and cultural values of potential hires that resonate with the organization. (3)					

Strategy	Not Yet	Some-what	Mostly	Fully	Comments/Next Steps
Onboarding, Orientation, and Ongoing Professional Development Strategies					
13. Develop and implement an onboarding process to integrate new hires into your organizational culture. For example, have employees take a work styles inventory such as Strengths-Finder 2 as part of this process. (4)					
14. Prepare a work area for each new hire, and assign a mentor to make new hires feel welcome on day one. (4)					
15. Implement a structured process for ongoing professional development that includes specific knowledge, skills, and abilities to support all staff including managers, supervisors, and home visitors as they engage in a culturally competent way with families. (4)					
16. Partner with institutions of higher education to provide college credits or continuing education units for professional development on cultural and linguistic competence provided through the organization. (4)					
17. Develop and implement a ongoing coaching process that includes frequent check-ins during the first few months of employment. (4)					

Strategy	Not Yet	Some-what	Mostly	Fully	Comments/Next Steps
18. Include cultural competence as a requirement for job performance by incorporating it into performance evaluations, promotions, and professional development. (2, 3, 9)					
Retention Strategies					
19. Incorporate meaningful discussion about cultural competence such as personal experiences of bias, or differences in values with other staff or families, as part of ongoing reflective supervision. (4)					
20. Institute a policy and process that support openness and respect, so that staff are comfortable talking about situations in which they may have experienced insensitive or exclusionary behaviors, tolerance of bias, or marginalization within the organization or by colleagues. (9, 14)					
21. Address workforce diversity challenges by taking immediate remedial action as needed when discriminatory, prejudiced, or biased situations are noted or registered. (9, 14)					
22. Assist home visitors in productively responding to conflict by first diffusing the situation and then addressing the issue in a respectful and supportive way. (9, 14)					

Strategy	Not Yet	Some-what	Mostly	Fully	Comments/Next Steps
23. Honor and value the work of home visitors, and celebrate their cultural and linguistic diversity. Embed diversity in your organization's environment, events, and resources. For example, host an annual party or other get-together to acknowledge the service of home visitors to their communities. (2, 9)					

Next Steps

1. Now that your team has completed the Reflection and Planning Tool, take a look at it as a whole.

2. Take a strength-based approach: Begin by listing the strategies that are already in place.

3. Note strategies where the team consensus was "not yet" or "somewhat."

4. Decide how you will work together as a team to strengthen your organization's cultural and linguistic competence in relation to workforce recruitment and retention. There are different ways to go about this—for example:

    ▪ Prioritize areas of effort where some aspects are already in place or where planning is currently underway. This approach may allow you to see immediate, short-term progress.

    ▪ Tackle one or two big strategies that the team decided were "not yet" or "somewhat" in place.

    ▪ Use this as an opportunity to accomplish a longer-term strategy—perhaps something that you have been wanting to implement for a long time.

5. Once your team has decided on its approach, create an action plan for identifying and planning for the next steps. A template such as this might be useful:

Action Plan for Infusing Cultural and Linguistic Competence into the Recruitment and Retention of Home Visitors

Action Step	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Comments/Next Steps

6. Revisit this Reflection and Planning Tool at least annually. Celebrate as you make progress toward implementing each strategy. Identify new strategies to work on as you continue to infuse cultural and linguistic competence into the recruitment and retention of home visitors. Use the Comments/Next Steps column to track your progress and note successes and accomplishments. This will be useful in documenting positive changes and supporting your strength-based approach.

7. Revise your action plan based on your updated tool. Incorporate any new strategies you have identified into your action plan.

Resources

Developing Culturally Responsive Approaches to Serving Diverse Populations: A Resource Guide for Community-Based Organizations, from the National Research Center for Hispanic Children and Families, is designed to help community-based organizations serve the needs of diverse populations.

Examining the Associations Between Infant/Toddler Workforce Preparation, Program Quality and Child Outcomes: A Review of the Research Evidence is a report from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Introduction to Competency-Based Hiring explores how organizations can best use this technique in the hiring process.

National CLAS standards, developed by HHS's Office of Minority Health, provides a framework for improving health care quality and advancing health equity to serve the nation's increasingly diverse communities.

Pursuing Organizational Cultural Competence, an excerpt from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's *Improving Cultural Competence*, focuses on developing cultural competence at the organizational level.

Staffing Issues for Home Visiting Programs is a 1993 article that is still relevant today. Author Barbara Hanna Wasik lays a strong foundation for understanding staffing issues in home visiting programs.

Ten Things You Should Do to Promote Cultural Competence is a tip sheet on how to promote cultural competence.