

Multicultural Awareness: Working with Diverse Participants



TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW	1
What Is Culture?.....	2
Some of the Cultures Served by WIC.....	3
Why Is Culture Important?	4
About Culture.....	7
Cultural Competence.....	8
Working with the Participant Whose Culture Differs from Yours.....	10
Communicating with Someone Who’s Language You Do Not Speak.....	12
LEARNING ACTIVITIES	14
1: What Is Your Culture?	15
2: Cultural Beliefs and Behaviors.....	17
3: A Co-Worker’s Story.....	19
4: When I am Culturally Competent	22
5: Understanding the Cultures Served by Your WIC Agency	23
6: Communicating with People Whose Language Is Different than Yours	27
7: Role Plays.....	29
POST-TEST	31

OVERVIEW

Introduction

The participants at WIC come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. This module will help you to welcome and appreciate the diversity and differences at WIC.

Learning Objectives

After completing this module you will be able to:

- Define culture and identify five elements of culture.
 - Explain how two diverse cultures can interpret the same non-verbal cue differently.
 - Explain how culture affects health and dietary behaviors.
 - Explain how the first and second generations of a culture may have different beliefs and behaviors related to WIC services.
 - Provide examples of how communication differs with people speaking various languages.
 - Provide examples of how cultural factors can impact WIC services.
 - Provide examples of a Culturally Competent Person.
 - Communicate across cultures.
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WHAT IS CULTURE?

Definition

Culture is: the shared values, beliefs, views, traditions, norms, customs, arts, folklore, and history of a group of people.

Elements of Culture

Elements of Culture include:

- race or ethnicity,
 - country of origin,
 - roles of women and men,
 - age,
 - religion or spiritual practice,
 - language or dialect,
 - food,
 - common beliefs,
 - sexual orientation,
 - family structure,
 - residence,
 - education,
 - Socioeconomic status,
 - profession and/or
 - health status.
-

Why is culture important?

Culture greatly affects our health decisions, it can affect our behaviors about:

- diet and nutrition,
 - pregnancy,
 - breastfeeding,
 - alcohol and drug use,
 - family planning, and
 - health care.
-

Culture is NOT Just Ethnicity

Culture includes our ethnicity but **isn't** limited to ethnicity.

For example, you may identify with people who share your ethnic background, but may identify **more** with people who share your religious beliefs.

Multiple Cultures

People often relate to many cultures.

For example, a person may be **Hispanic**, have grown up in a **rural** community, **speak only English**, and be a **single mother**. She may identify with at least 4 cultures.

Types of Cultures

WIC serves people of many cultures. The chart on the following page gives you a list of some of the characteristics of cultures and an example of each.

SOME OF THE CULTURES SERVED BY WIC

Cultural Characteristics	DESCRIPTION <i>People of this culture identify with people who:</i>	EXAMPLE <i>An example of the representative culture could be:</i>
Age	are similar in age	teenagers
Country of Origin	were born or grew up in the same country	Laotian immigrants
Ethnicity	are of the same ethnic background	Chinese Americans
Family Structure	have a similar family make up	single mothers
Gender	are of the same sex	male WIC participants
Health Status	have a similar health condition	a person with diabetes
Income	make about the same amount of money	TANF (welfare) recipients
Language	speak the same language	Spanish-speaking participants
Religion	share similar religious beliefs	Seventh Day Adventists
Residence	live in the same area	people living in a migrant camp
Work	do similar work	Nutrition Assistants

Learning Activity

Learning Activity: *What is Your Culture?* Complete this learning activity at the end of this module to help you learn more about your culture.

WHY IS CULTURE IMPORTANT?

A Design for Living

Culture gives people a design for living.

It is a group's:

- Assumptions about the world
- Goals and meanings of life
- Views about what is right and what is wrong
- Views of what is important and what isn't, and
- Beliefs about how to behave and how to expect others to behave. *(adapted from a definition by Noel Day, Porlaris Research and Development, San Francisco)*

Culture helps people structure their community and family life.

Culture Affects Beliefs, Values, and Behaviors

A person's culture often determines her/his:

- beliefs,
 - values, and
 - behaviors.
-

Beliefs

Beliefs are what a person views as true in life and/or death.

For example, Buddhists believe suffering is part of life.

Values

Values are what a person sees as important or meaningful in life.

For example, many people in the United States value time and see "time as money."

Behaviors

Behaviors are what a person does.

For example, exercising is a healthy behavior.

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WHY IS CULTURE IMPORTANT? *(continued)*

Culture Affects Health Behaviors

Culture greatly affects our health decisions. It can affect our behaviors about:

- diet and nutrition,
 - pregnancy,
 - breastfeeding,
 - alcohol and drug use,
 - family planning, and
 - health care.
-

Examples of How Culture Affects Health

The chart on the next page shows some examples of how culture can affect health and nutrition beliefs and behaviors.

Learning Activity

Learning Activity 2: “*Cultural Beliefs and Behaviors*” Complete this learning activity at the end of this module to help you learn more about how culture affects our health beliefs and behaviors.



WHY IS CULTURE IMPORTANT? *(continued)*

Some Examples of Belief Systems and How They Affect Health and Nutrition

TOPIC	EXAMPLE
Diet And Nutrition	Chinese recipes use tofu (bean curd) more often than dairy products.
Pregnancy	Some Southeast Asian cultures see teen pregnancy as normal.
Breastfeeding	Some cultures limit breastfeeding because of embarrassment, lack of social support, inadequate maternity leave, and concerns about infant weight gain or breastmilk quality.
Alcohol And Drug Use	Seventh Day Adventist and Mormon religions prohibit the use of alcohol.
Family Planning	Many cultures see sharing of intimate information (i.e. sex, contraception) as disrespectful.
Health Care	Christian Science families don't immunize their children.

ABOUT CULTURE

About Culture

- Culture is the total range of activities and ideas of a group of people with shared traditions, which are communicated and strengthened by members of the group. Race and ethnicity are thought to be major parts of culture. People often belong to one or more subgroups affecting thought and behavior. Factors such as geographic location, lifestyle, and age are also important in shaping what people value and hold dear. There is more to culture than just what we see.
 - A cultural group consciously or unconsciously shares values, norms, symbols, and ways of living repeated and transmitted from one generation to another.
 - Health care beliefs and practices can be changed with time and new information; our practices may be similar or very different from our parents.
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CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Definition

Cultural competence is the ability to communicate comfortably and effectively with people of different cultures.

A culturally competent person is aware and respectful of beliefs, values, traditions, customs, and parenting styles from other cultures.

Culturally competent people:

- have an open attitude toward others who are different from themselves,
 - are willing to learn new information and skills from people of other cultures,
 - are sensitive when communicating to people's needs and
 - are willing to share information about cultural experiences.
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Having an Open Attitude

Culturally competent people have an open attitude toward others who are different from themselves. Having an open attitude is defined as being non-judgmental when someone's beliefs or practices differ from yours.

Willing to Learn New Information and Skills

Culturally competent people are willing to learn new information and skills from people of other cultures. You can develop cultural competence by becoming familiar with the customs, beliefs, and values of participants. You can do this by:

- talking to your friends, neighbors, and co-workers from other cultures,
 - attending cultural events such as special festivals and celebrations,
 - eating at different ethnic restaurants,
 - reading about other cultures and
 - developing an interest in local news stories which focus on cultural issues.
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CULTURAL COMPETENCE *(continued)*

Communicating with Sensitivity

Culturally competent people are sensitive when communicating to people's needs. They use appropriate words, language, posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and body language for the individual's culture.

Sharing Cultural Experiences

Culturally competent people are willing to share information about cultural experiences. They understand cultural competence is developed through a variety of experiences and is an ongoing process.

Learning Activity

Learning Activity 3, *A Co-Worker's Story*, found at the end of this module can help you learn more about the cultures of your coworkers.

Learning Activity 4, *When I am Culturally Competent'*, found at the end of this module can help you learn more about becoming culturally competent.



WORKING WITH THE PARTICIPANT WHOSE CULTURAL BACKGROUND DIFFERS FROM YOURS

WIC Serves Many Different People

At WIC you will meet a variety of people. You may meet people who have different customs, beliefs, values, attitudes, language, education, and experiences from yours.

Communication Can Be Difficult

Communicating with people of different cultures can be difficult, not only because of language, but beliefs. Even with the best intentions, you may make some mistakes when communicating with people whose background is different from your own.

Some Characteristics to Keep in Mind

The chart on the next page may help you understand the diversity among Washington's participant population. It lists some different characteristics among cultures. Remember these differences when communicating with those not sharing your cultural background.

Never Make Assumptions

Beliefs differ between groups and within groups. Avoid making assumptions, a person's beliefs can change with age, new experiences, new generations, and new information. Only by asking will you know what a person believes.

For example, people from certain Asian cultures may not eat a lot of dairy products, but we can't assume that every individual from that cultural group doesn't eat dairy.



WORKING WITH THE PARTICIPANT WHOSE CULTURAL BACKGROUND DIFFERS FROM YOURS *(continued)*

Various Characteristics of Other Cultures

Characteristic	Suggestions
<p style="text-align: center;">Social Structure</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(a cultural view of family hierarchy)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the hierarchy of the family or group. • Be sensitive of tone when speaking to family members. • Cultures differ in how they prefer to be addressed. (For example, don't compliment a participant's child unless you know it is culturally appropriate.)
<p style="text-align: center;">Concept of Time</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(a cultural view of time)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember, not all cultures are time conscious or believe <i>time is money</i>. • Explain the reasons for being on time to WIC appointments.
<p style="text-align: center;">Expressions</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(a cultural view of expressing feelings)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize some cultures are expressive and direct, while others are quiet and indirect. • Use humor carefully; humor is difficult to understand and differs by culture. • Touching a participant or a participant's child may be offensive. This includes handshakes. Be polite, ask first. • Pointing with your index finger or to beckoning with at curled finger may be offensive and seen as rude.

Learning Activity

Learning Activity 5, *Understanding the Cultures served by Your WIC Agency*, found at the end of this module can help you learn more about understanding the various cultures served by your agency.

COMMUNICATING WITH SOMEONE WHO'S LANGUAGE YOU DO NOT SPEAK

In Washington

In Washington many of our WIC participants may speak little or no English.

Communicating with Limited English Speaking Participants

If you don't speak the participant's native language then you need to learn some ways to communicate with limited English speaking participants.

For limited English speaking participants use the guidelines listed on the next page.

Avoid Situations that Exclude Others

A staff person should be careful in speaking a language that a participant doesn't understand. S/he should use that language as needed but not in a way that others may feel excluded.

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COMMUNICATING WITH SOMEONE WHO'S LANGUAGE YOU DO NOT SPEAK *(continued)*

Guidelines for Communication

Do	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen carefully• Show your face and lips when speaking• Speak slowly• Speak clearly• Focus on the main points• Use words the participant uses• Write down words when spoken words aren't understood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using words the participant might not know• Using slang, jargon or abbreviations• Using contractions such as <i>wouldn't</i> for <i>would not</i>• Using words with a negative meaning such as <i>barely</i> or <i>hardly</i>• Using stereotypes

Learning Activity

Learning Activity 6: “*Communicating with People Whose Language is Different than Yours*”, found at the end of this module, can help you learn more about communicating with people who speak a different language.

Learning Activity

Learning Activity 7: “*Role Plays*”, found at the end of this module, can help you reinforce and practice cultural skills.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The following activities are included and are recommended for interactive learning:

- **Learning Activity 1:** What Is Your Culture?
- **Learning Activity 2:** Cultural Beliefs and Behaviors
- **Learning Activity 3:** A Co-Worker's Story
- **Learning Activity 4:** When I am Culturally Competent
- **Learning Activity 5:** Understanding the Cultures Served by Your WIC Agency
- **Learning Activity 6:** Communicating with People Whose Language Is Different than yours
- **Learning Activity 7:** Role Plays

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT IS YOUR CULTURE?

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, staff will be able to:

- identify some aspects of her/his culture, and
 - identify some commonalities and differences of her/his culture with that of participants.
-

Background

Culture is the shared values, beliefs, views, traditions, norms, customs, arts, folklore, history and institutions of a group of people. Culture can include race or ethnicity, country of origin, roles of women and men, age, religion or spiritual practice, language or dialect, sexual orientation, family structure, residence, education, income, profession, and/or health status.

A person may relate to many cultures. You may identify with a particular ethnic group, age group, place of residence, religion and/or other element of culture.

Instructions

1. This activity is designed to help you think more broadly about culture. Understand it may bring up feelings about your past or how you were treated.
 2. Using what you have learned, complete the form on the next page.
 3. After completing the form, think about your different cultures. With how many cultures do you identify?
 4. How are you the same as a WIC participant who may come to your WIC site? What cultures do you share? How are you different?
 5. You may want to discuss what you learned with your mentor or supervisor.
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ACTIVITY 1: WHAT IS YOUR CULTURE?

1. Where were you born? (city and country)

2. Where do you live? (describe the neighborhood)

3. What is your family ethnicity or heritage?

4. What is one thing you are proud of in your life?

5. What is your favorite food?

6. When was the first time you felt different?

7. Describe a health practice or belief from your culture.

8. Describe a nutrition or diet message you learned from your family.

9. Describe a belief you have different from your family.

ACTIVITY 2: CULTURAL BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, staff will be able to explain how culture can affect health and diet behaviors.

Background

Culture greatly affects our health beliefs and behaviors. It can affect our beliefs and behaviors about:

- diet and nutrition,
- pregnancy,
- breastfeeding,
- alcohol and drug use,
- family planning, and
- health care.

A cultural group shares many beliefs and behaviors. These are often repeated and passed from one generation to another. However, new information and time may change some of these. Our beliefs and behaviors may differ from our parents.

Instructions

1. Reflect on your childhood, family beliefs about diet/nutrition, pregnancy, breastfeeding, alcohol/drug use, family planning, and health care.
 2. Complete the form on the next page.
 3. Review your answers. Which of your family's beliefs are similar to our participants? Which are different?
-

ACTIVITY 2: CULTURAL BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS

1. When you were growing up what were your family's views/beliefs about:

a. nutrition and healthy eating?

b. who should prepare the food?

c. pregnancy?

d. breastfeeding?

e. family planning?

2. How are your beliefs/views the same or different from those of your family?

3. How did the cost of food affect your family's eating behavior?

4. What is the current role of women in your culture? What is the current role of men? Have these roles changed since you were a child?

ACTIVITY 3: A CO-WORKER'S STORY

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, you will be able to identify how past experiences influence our current beliefs and behaviors.

Instructions

1. Arrange to interview two co-workers.
2. Interview each co-worker on one of six topics:
 - diet and nutrition,
 - pregnancy,
 - breastfeeding,
 - alcohol and drug use,
 - family planning, and
 - health care.
3. Use the form on the next page as a guide and to make notes.
4. Your co-worker may think of *culture* as their ethnic group, gender, immediate family or a combination of these elements to determine who they are.
5. Did you make any assumptions before talking to your co-worker? If so, did your views change during or after the interview?

ACTIVITY 3: A CO-WORKER'S STORY

Co-Worker's Name:

TOPIC:

- diet/nutrition
- pregnancy
- breastfeeding
- family planning
- alcohol/drug use
- health care

1. What did you learn from your culture about _____?

2. What advice (traditions, rules, taboos) was shared by your culture regarding _____?

3. Has this advice changed since childhood? If so, how?

4. How does your experience about _____ affect your work?

5. How do you handle differences in your beliefs about _____ with others?

ACTIVITY 3: A CO-WORKER'S STORY

Co-Worker's Name:

TOPIC:

- diet/nutrition
- pregnancy
- breastfeeding
- family planning
- alcohol/drug use
- health care

1. What did you learn from your culture about _____?

2. What advice (traditions, rules, taboos) was shared by your culture regarding _____?

3. Has this advice changed since childhood? If so, how?

4. How does your experience about _____ affect your work?

5. How do you handle differences in your beliefs about _____ with others?

ACTIVITY 4: “WHEN I AM CULTURALLY COMPETENT . . .”

For answer the following questions and discuss your responses.

- When I am doing my best at communicating with other cultures, I will find ...
- What improvements can I make in communicating with other cultures?
- When I am communicating well with other cultures, how will this affect others?

ACTIVITY 5: UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURES SERVED BY YOUR WIC AGENCY

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, you will be able to better understand the cultures served by WIC.

Background

It is important for you to become familiar with the various cultures served by your agency. Being aware of participant diversity will help provide services more effectively.

Instructions

1. Choose three cultures your agency serves. Remember culture isn't just ethnicity. Select from the entire caseload including teens, migrants, military families or people with disabilities.
 2. Complete a chart (found on the next few pages) for each cultural group. Make sure to talk to someone from each of these cultures. You may also want to talk to your co-workers, friends, or family members for information.
 3. Remember that the information you gather will be true for some but not all participants of the group. The information can serve as a guide, but you should always treat each participant as an individual.
-

**ACTIVITY 5: UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURES
SERVED BY YOUR AGENCY**

Name of Culture:

TOPIC	BELIEFS/VIEWS	DO'S and DON'TS
Nutrition/Diet		
Pregnancy		
Breastfeeding		
Parenting		
Family Planning		
Health Care		

Other important information about this culture:

**ACTIVITY 5: UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURES
SERVED BY YOUR WIC AGENCY**

Name of Culture:

TOPIC	BELIEFS/VIEWS	DO'S and DON'TS
Nutrition/Diet		
Pregnancy		
Breastfeeding		
Parenting		
Family Planning		
Health Care		

Other important information about this culture:

**ACTIVITY 5: UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURES
SERVED BY YOUR WIC AGENCY**

Name of Culture:		
TOPIC	BELIEFS/VIEWS	DO'S and DON'TS
Nutrition/Diet		
Pregnancy		
Breastfeeding		
Parenting		
Family Planning		
Health Care		
Other important information about this culture:		

ACTIVITY 6: COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WHOSE LANGUAGE IS DIFFERENT THAN YOURS

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, the Nutrition Assistant will be able to:

- Communicate, with the help of an interpreter, with a participant whose language is different than her/his language.

Background

Some of the participants in WIC either don't speak English or have limited English speaking skills. For non-English speaking participants your agency will most likely use someone who speaks their language.

Sometimes a WIC agency uses an interpreter; this person translates what the participant says into the language of the staff person and then translates what the staff person says back into the language of the participant. If you are working as an interpreter make sure you:

- translate as close as possible to the meaning of what is said and
- check to make sure the participant understands what is being said.

Instructions

1. This activity will help you understand how your agency handles non-English or limited English speaking participants.
2. Interview your mentor or supervisor. Ask her/him to explain how your agency handles non-English or limited English speakers.
3. After you have learned about your agency's procedures, observe:
 - a. a co-worker counseling a **non-English speaking** participant and
 - b. a co-worker counseling a **limited English speaking** participant.
4. Note your agency's procedures and any tips for communicating with non-English speaking or limited English speaking participants on the form on the next page.

ACTIVITY 6: COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WHOSE LANGUAGE IS DIFFERENT THAN YOURS

Procedure for Communicating with:

Non-English Speaking Participants	Limited English Speaking Participants

Tips for Communicating with:

Non-English Speaking Participant	Limited English Speaking Participant

ACTIVITY 7: ROLE PLAYS

Learning Objectives

After completing this activity, the Nutrition Assistant will be able to:

- communicate cross-culturally more effectively.

Background

Cultural competence is the ability to communicate comfortably and effectively with people of different cultures.

Instructions

1. Ask your mentor, supervisor, or a co-worker to role play any 3 of the 5 roles (A-E) described on the following page.
 2. Using the information you have learned about cultural diversity, act out the role of a certifier for each of the 3 situations.
 3. Mentor/Supervisor/Co-Worker: Using the role plays as your guide, act out the role of the participant. Try to be as realistic as possible.
 4. After each session, ask your co-worker to tell you what she noticed. Make sure to ask for your strengths as well as weaknesses.
-

ACTIVITY 7: ROLE PLAYS

-
- Role Play A** Juanita Garcia recently immigrated from Puerto Rico. This is her first visit to your WIC site. She uses a non-verbal wrinkling of her nose to mean “What?” (Wrinkling of the nose is a non-verbal cue often used by Puerto Ricans to show they don’t understand. You don’t know this.)
-
- Role Play B** Amy Chang is first generation Taiwanese. Her 3 year old recently had food poisoning. She is worried that something similar will happen to her 6-month old. However, she shows no emotions--- not even when you ask her about her 3-year old!
-
- Role Play C** Kim Nguyen is a 17-year old pregnant woman recently emigrated from Vietnam. She has 2 young children. She has followed her culture’s custom of marrying young. She speaks limited English and you don’t speak Vietnamese.
-
- Role Play D** Terry Monroe is a pregnant drug user. She tells you she “shoots up” regularly and shows you the “track” marks on her arms. She tells you she has been living on the “streets” and that she works as a prostitute. She says she is worried about her baby.
-
- Role Play E** Mary Jersey tells you that she doesn’t eat meat. (She is a Seventh Day Adventist.) She also tells you that she was offended by the pamphlet that she got last visit. (It referred to the eating of meat.) She doesn’t feel respected and shows this by her body language.
-

POST-TEST

Trainee: Print and complete this post-test. Give it to your supervisor. Review your answers with your supervisor at a scheduled time.

1. Mark the following as "TRUE" or "FALSE".

_____ Culture is the shared values, beliefs, views, traditions, norms, customs, arts, folklore, history and institutions of a group of people.

_____ Culture doesn't include our ethnicity.

_____ A participant may relate more with her religious background than her ethnic background.

_____ Pregnant teens are a culture served by WIC.

_____ A person may identify with many cultures.

2. Put a check mark (✓) next to any of the cultures usually served by WIC.

_____ pregnant women

_____ senior citizens

_____ single mothers

_____ male business executives

_____ infants

_____ breastfeeding women

_____ 10-year old children

3. List 5 elements of culture.

POST - TEST *(continued)*

4. Give 2 non-verbal cues that could have different meanings dependent on the culture.

5. Mark the following as "TRUE" or "FALSE".

_____ Humor is the same in all cultures.

_____ Culture helps people understand their world.

_____ Showing emotions such as crying is acceptable behavior in all cultures.

_____ You can assume all generations of a culture have the same beliefs and values.

_____ When communicating with someone who speaks a different language than you, speak slowly, clearly, and focus on the main points.

_____ All cultures agree *time is money*.

_____ When counseling a participant remember to always compliment her child.



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