

Tip Sheet on Providing Culturally Appropriate Services

This tip sheet can help providers think through delivering culturally appropriate services to diverse clients.

1. Consider the client's lived experience and explore topics that may be affecting their mental health. For example, check in with your client on topics such as family acceptance or chosen family if they are LGBTQ+ or check on any stress related to acculturation if they just migrated to the United States.
2. Make sure services and resources are being rendered in the language the client is most comfortable speaking. Having other family members translate information to them is not appropriate.
3. Ask your client about where they feel most comfortable receiving services. For many, a clinical environment may be a place of stress. Perhaps they would prefer teletherapy or meeting in an outdoor space. For example, LGBTQ+ clients who have not disclosed their identities to others may not want to receive services at LGBTQ+ community centers.
4. Make sure your team or space reflects a diverse array of people. For example, be sure to include photos for LGBTQ+ older adults in your resources, website, or office. Make sure your space reflects the community that is most frequently accessing your services. If many of your clients are Black or Latinx, make sure your space is to communicate the space is for them.
5. Implement practices that show affirmation, such as displaying or introducing your own pronouns, using gender neutral language (e.g., partner, parents, siblings), or providing all-gender restrooms.
6. If you are providing a program to the community, ask yourself who the program was originally developed for and whether it deserves any cultural adaptations to be most appropriate to the community you are serving. For example, an LGBTQ+ minority stress program that does not address the stress of racism may not resonate with LGBTQ+ people of color.
7. Make sure you, and your staff, are getting the training you need to serve the community appropriately while acknowledging that training will not give you expertise on a client's individual experiences.
8. Use a client led approach which acknowledges their authority over their care. Provide space for them to define their own strengths and needs to you.
9. Allow for flexibility in care. Communities that are under resourced may often have barriers to transportation or communication that may inhibit their ability to make every appointment or complete a program using a specified timeline.
10. Acknowledge that many cultures hold values of peace keeping and anti-conflict, which may prevent them from providing constructive feedback if a service is not meeting their need. As providers, build in natural opportunities for clients to provide feedback. Use client and community feedback, to make needed changes to your practices or programs.