

DEFINITION OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

The term “cultural competence” refers to possessing and demonstrating the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to support the full potential of each and every child, family, and community. Culturally competent programs, organizations, and individuals acknowledge and demonstrate respect for other individual’s or other group’s values, preferences, and life conditions in ways that enable them to achieve equitable and inclusive outcomes.

The term “cultural” refers to an individual’s or group’s ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and educational frame of reference as well as differences in family characteristics, language, dialect, gender, ability, values, sexual orientation, life conditions, religion and community.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO SUPPORT CULTURAL COMPETENCY

The early years are critical to holistic development. Each and every child learns and develops within the context of relationships and through meaningful interactions within their environments. Children, families and communities benefit from education, services and supports that are provided by professionals who reflect the diversity of the community and who participate in an integrated, multi-disciplinary system of professional development.

We know that . . .

Culture is ever changing as are the dynamics that result from these changes.

Therefore, we are committed to . . .

- Viewing our guiding principles as a living document that is responsive to change
- Supporting cooperation, communication and coordination among public and private agencies/organizations to address issues, concerns and revisions to our principles and practices
- Ongoing evaluation of current practices and the incorporation of effective methods, models, and research that are respectful of and responsive to each and every child, family and community
- Suspending biases to build trust and establish collaborative partnerships that benefit children, their families, communities and the professionals who work with them.

Each and every child, family and community has unique gifts and abilities to celebrate and nurture.

Therefore, we are committed to . . .

- Guaranteeing inclusive practices that build upon unique child, family, and community strengths and that are accountable to every child and their family
- Valuing, embracing and respecting each and every child, family and community.

Each and every child deserves equitable access to a Quality Rated early care and education program that acknowledges their uniqueness. Such programs are committed to providing services and supports to help them reach their full potential and later school success.

Therefore, we are committed to . . .

- Serving each and every child, family, and community in non-judgmental ways with dignity and respect
- Acknowledging and respecting that families are the ultimate decision-makers for services and supports for their children and for themselves
- Providing options, flexibility, and continuity of services and supports for families within communities that include all aspects of education, health and wellness
- Identifying challenges to access and creating a variety of services and supports that are available so each and every child has access to and can participate in opportunities that are both respectful of and responsive to their family experiences, culture, beliefs, abilities, and life conditions
- Promoting the understanding of the importance of high quality early care and education programs and practices as exemplified in Quality Rated.

Children, families and programs are nested in communities.

Therefore, we are committed to . . .

- Recognizing the diversity within and among multi-cultural communities and being sensitive and responsive to the unique cultures, languages and abilities of those communities
- Engaging communities as partners and decision makers by working with natural, informal support networks such as neighborhood, civic and advocacy associations; local/neighborhood merchants and alliance groups; ethnic, social, and religious organizations; and spiritual leaders and healers
- Valuing the input of family and community partners in program improvement and expansion.