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TDCI

TennCare Oversight Division

October 2, 2023 • How symptoms are expressed

Matter # 23-0725 • How rights and protections are understood

And why is it important?

Cultural competency is one the main ingredients in closing the disparities gap in health care. It's the way patients and providers can come together and talk about health concerns without cultural differences hindering the conversation but enhancing it. Quite simply, health care services that are respectful of and responsive to the health beliefs, practices and cultural and linguistic needs of diverse patients can help bring about positive health outcomes.

Cultural competence emphasizes the idea of effectively operating in different cultural contexts and altering practices to reach different cultural groups. Cultural competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes.

A cultural competency program can help you respectfully and sensitively address the needs of your patients who have been marginalized because of their race, gender, sex, age, and other protected statuses. There are many cultural influences that impact the delivery of health care services. Some cultural preferences to remember include the following:

- Do patients feel that their privacy is respected?
- Are they the health care decision maker?
- Does the patient's belief in botanical treatments and healers contradict standard medical practices and does it impact their decisions?
- What type of language skills and preferences does the patient use in their interactions?

Because health care is a cultural construct based in beliefs about the nature of disease and the human body, cultural issues are central in the delivery of health services.

Culture impacts every health care encounter. By understanding these influences and by communicating clearly at each visit you fulfill the opportunity to build rapport, help improve adherence and safety.