



# Cultural Humility Practices: When Working With Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Individuals

## **Culture**

Culture refers to the integrated patterns of human behavior that include the languages, thoughts, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions that unite a group of people. Culture includes but is not limited to: ethnicity, language, education, religion/beliefs, family and community, race, age, gender, immigration status, and socioeconomic status. There is no overarching transgender culture; however, transgender and gender nonconforming people may share similar experiences.

## **Cultural Competence**

Cultural competence is an approach to care provision in which providers seek to understand broadly how culture plays a role in clients' health related understanding, decisions, practices, and outcomes. When working with transgender and gender nonconforming people this could include knowing the different types of medical transition services available and asking your clients which services they want to access. Unfortunately, sometimes in practice, providers attempt to memorize a set of facts about a particular group and apply those facts to all clients with that identity without taking into account the individual needs of the person in front of them.

## **Cultural Humility**

Cultural humility refers to the lifelong process of self-reflection, self-critique and commitment to understanding and respecting different points of view, and engaging with others authentically and from a place of learning. Cultural humility practices with transgender and gender nonconforming people could include asking clients or patients about their desires to transition instead of assuming all people want to do so at all or in the same way, apologizing when you make a mistake about someone's name or pronouns, and continuously engaging in training opportunities related to transgender and gender nonconforming people's health.

## **Critical Self-Reflection**

Critical self-reflection refers to the continuous process of becoming aware of and challenging the assumptions or stereotypes we hold about a client's or patient's cultural identities. This involves examining commonly held dominant assumptions and stereotypes about a client or patient's culture, which may prevent you from providing optimal care. This process leads to a more dynamic understanding of patient-provider interactions, and allows you to address power imbalances that can act as barriers to care. It is important that this process leads to action. When working with transgender and gender nonconforming clients or patients, you will make mistakes, and that's okay. After an encounter that didn't go particularly well, it's important to ask yourself the following questions:

*What about this encounter didn't go well?*

*What were my goals?*

*What were the client's or patient's goals?*

*Why did I respond or react the way I did?*

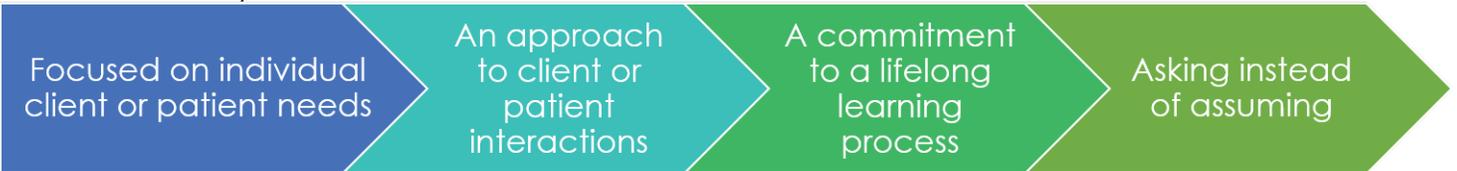
*What do I need to do to learn from this situation?*

*What assumptions did I have going into the situation?*

## Cultural Competency or Cultural Humility?

We encourage providers to practice cultural humility instead of cultural competency because we can never truly be competent in another person's culture. Cultural humility is not about gaining a specific set of knowledge about a certain community or communities, but rather changing the way we approach our interactions by recognizing that individuals who may share cultural values, beliefs, or customs, still have their own unique health care goals and needs.

Cultural humility is...



Cultural competence is...



### Additional Cultural Humility Practices When Working With Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Individuals

- Always use "they/them/their" pronouns or their name, until otherwise learned
- Develop systems to document name and pronouns and train all staff in these systems
- Share pronoun information with all staff, not just providers
- Be knowledgeable about and provide gender affirming care when possible
- Adopt an informed consent model that could break down gatekeeping barriers to gender affirming care
- Don't assume that all transgender and gender nonconforming youth want to access gender affirmation services
- Have all staff continuously participate in trainings and workshops about providing care to transgender and gender nonconforming communities
- Use electronic systems and intake forms that are inclusive of transgender and gender nonconforming people
- Assist transgender and gender nonconforming youth with identity document changes
- Affirm negative past experiences with health care services
- Be aware that transgender and gender nonconforming youth may or may not have family support
- Employ and/or train staff to support with facilitating care
- Employ members of the communities being served
- Provide resources and referrals for transportation, housing, employment, and social support

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