

**Diversity Audit: Assessment of Agency Cultural and Linguistic Competence**  
**Due week of November 30**

*(adapted from the Cultural Competence and Linguistic Competency Policy Assessment  
developed by the National Center for Cultural Competence)*

The purpose of this assessment is to identify the strengths and weaknesses in your agency, related to cultural and linguistic competence, and the agency's capacity to serve a diverse population of clients. You will be required to answer the questions below with the assistance of your field instructor and/or others within your agency who have the required information. You may need to interact with/interview a range of agency staff members to gather the information necessary to complete this audit.

This assignment is not meant to change agency practices. It is meant to sensitize students to how agencies manage issues related to cultural and linguistic competence. You will be sharing the results of this audit in Field Instruction seminar, summarizing your agency's strengths and weaknesses related to cultural competence, as well as discussing the specific goals and objectives you developed that could improve cultural and linguistic competence in your agency. Even though you are expected to develop goals to improve the agency's cultural and linguistic competence, you are not required to implement them. Still, please try to develop them with care and with attention to being realistic.

Please EXPLAIN each answer as completely as possible. DO NOT just write "YES" or "NO." Instead, describe what your agency actually does, related to each area. (Please try to make an effort to view agency actions, not what agency staff believes. For example, the staff may be very open-minded, and the agency's values may be stated as sensitive to diverse needs of clients -- but if there are no bilingual staff, the agency is limited in its ability to effectively serve certain clients.) In other words, please do not "sugar coat" your answers.

Your responses should be in the form of a "paper" (complete sentences/paragraphs etc., rather than "bullets"), but you may use the questions below as an outline.

- 1. Can most agency staff identify the culturally diverse communities in your service area? What are the culturally diverse communities within the agency's service area?** Please remember that "culture is an integrated pattern of human behavior, which includes but is not limited to-thought, communication, languages, beliefs, values, practices, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, roles, relationships and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious, social [socioeconomic] or political group...." (National Center for Cultural Competence, 1999, Revised 2002). (Hint: don't just think about race...)

Yes, most agency staff can identify the culturally diverse communities that receive services from the Family Program at the Children's Study Home. However, out of sixteen staff members, there are about four or five that could not identify the culture of the clients. I believe that this is because it is not required to have a degree in social work to work in this agency. A social work degree requires some education on cultural competence and employees without such a degree have probably not been educated about cultural competence.

At the Family Program, we service a wide range of culturally diverse people from educated to uneducated, high socioeconomic class to low socioeconomic class, some being involved with DCF for many years or their entire life to those involved with DCF for just a couple of weeks. In addition, clients come from many different backgrounds such as growing up with both parents or not having either parent involved in their upbringing. Clients are also of many different races, ethnicities, and religions, such as, Hispanic, African American, Caucasian, Jewish, Catholic, and Muslim. Lastly, I would like to add that there is not a generic client that the Children's Study Home services. Every client is different and their background and culture are unique to them. With that being said a majority of the clients that are serviced at the Children's Study Home are Hispanic or African American, uneducated and living in poverty.

- 2. Given your answer to question 1 (which culturally diverse communities are in the service area): How well can most agency staff describe the social strengths (e.g., support networks, family ties, spiritual leadership, etc.) of diverse cultural groups in your service area? Please identify the social strengths of these groups.**

Overall, the agency staff as a whole could describe the social strengths of the client population. This is not to say that none of the staff members could describe the social strengths of the client population but a majority the staff would struggle. This question is difficult to answer because at the agency we get such a wide range of clients and every client has their own strengths. However, as a majority the clients are determined, independent, hard working, and open minded.

- 3. Is your agency able to describe the social problems (e.g., dispersed families, poverty, unsafe housing, etc.) of diverse cultural groups in your service area? What are these social problems?**

In contrast to what I said above, I do think that the majority of the staff members could describe the social problems of the clients because weaknesses are easier to identify in clients that are struggling. Children's Study Home and DFC focus on weaknesses and work on building up the weak aspects of the clients in order to help them rather than focusing on the clients strengths.

All of the clients that are served by the Children's Study Home have a specific reason as to why DCF and Children's Study Home are involved in their lives and it usually involves one or more of these reasons: substance abuse, unsafe discipline, sexual or physical abuse, mental health issues, or unsafe housing. However, other social weaknesses lead to these problems, such as poverty, loss of family ties, improper upbringing, or trauma.

- 4. How well do agency staff understand the beliefs, customs, and values of diverse cultural groups in your service area?** Please explain your answer, giving an example or two, describing how staff has or has not demonstrated their understanding.

Some of the Children's Study Home's staff members understand the beliefs, customs, and values of the clients. For example, my supervisor does not penalize clients if they miss a parent education meeting due to work reasons. He understands that many of the clients need to work to get paid, and he does not want to punish them or put them further into poverty. However, other staff members do penalize for missed parent education meetings due to work, which is the protocol for the agency (question 20). On the other hand, some of the staff does not understand the beliefs, customs, and values of the client. For example, a newly hired staff member answered a phone call in the middle of a supervised visit, not knowing that it would show disrespect to the client. If the worker was aware of the client's beliefs, customs, and values then she would have understood that answering her phone is a sign of disrespect to the client.
- 5. What languages and dialects used by the culturally diverse groups in your service area are agency staff able to speak and understand? Which languages and dialects used by the culturally diverse groups in your service area are agency staff not able to speak and understand?**

In the Family Program we have staff that can speak both American English and Spanish. Other than those two languages we do not have any staff members that can understand any other language or dialect, however DCF and Family Networks does not refer any clients to the Children's Study Homes that speak any other language, therefore, there is never a situation where a client speaks a language that their worker does not understand.
- 6. Is there an adequate number of bilingual staff available to address the needs of clients who don't speak English (and/or who are deaf)?** Does your agency have translation services available, including services to people who are hearing impaired? If so, what must workers or clients do to access these services? What are your thoughts about the accessibility of interpretive/translation services?

There are five staff members that speak fluent Spanish and the rest of the staff only speaks English causing problems of not being able to serve populations that do not speak English or Spanish. The Children's Study Home does not have translation services in place. Having interpretive services would not make much sense at the family program because we meet twice a week at the client's house and if an interpreter was needed every time that could become difficult. It would also be difficult to build a strong working relationship with a client through a translator. I feel that it would be better if DCF and family networks referred those clients that do not speak English or Spanish to another

similar agency that could accommodate for the language of the client until the Children's Study Home hires a worker that speaks another language other than English or Spanish.

**7. How well do agency staff understand the attitudes towards seeking professional help of diverse cultural groups in your service area? What are some of the different attitudes towards seeking professional help of diverse cultural groups in your service area?**

The staff understands that the culture they work with a majority of the time does not want to be involved with these services, and they are only attending because it is mandated in order to get their children back. However, I have had two cases where the services were nearing termination and the client asked to extend the services because they find it beneficial and useful. Also, clients of the Children's Study Home often have trust issues and have difficulty trusting social workers, especially social workers involved with the removal of their children or child. Even though we at the Children's Study Home are not directly involved with the removal of their children or child, they still demonstrate trust issues because we are associated with the DCF services and have control over what happens in the future with their child.

**8. Does your agency's mission statement incorporate cultural and linguistic competence in service delivery? Explain.**

No, the agency mission for the Children's Study Home does not incorporate cultural or linguistic competence. The mission statement uses words such as innovative and empowering, which could be difficult to read and understand if you have a limited education. In addition, it is in English and only English, so all of the Spanish speaking clients that are served that the Children's Study Home would not be able to understand it.

**9. Does your agency have printed information in the languages of the diverse cultural groups in your service area? (agency policies, permission for treatment, release of information, etc.)**

Yes, all of the informed consent and agency policies are in English and Spanish. For clients that speak Spanish they are assigned a worker that speaks Spanish and the forms they use are in Spanish.

**10. Does your agency systematically review procedures to ensure they are relevant to the practices of diverse cultural groups in your service area? If so, what is the nature of this review?**

To a degree the Children's Study Home systematically reviews procedures to ensure they are relevant to the client's needs. For instance, every client has their own specific personal treatment plan to fit the client's culture and needs. However, many of the staff members use generic (already created) goals and objectives for all of their clients, such as all of their clients have a goal to maintain stable housing, but if that is not an issue then it is a waste of time to focus on that goal. Also, after each time I present a parent education topic I ask the client if it was useful, but I am not sure if other staff members do that as well.

The agency as a whole does program reviews that the workers fill out yearly, yet there is little follow up in action after the paper work is completed. Also, as an agency we

do an annual review that reviews each program and each program's cost /benefit outcome.

**11. Do members of the diverse cultural groups in your service area participate on agency boards or committees? Explain.**

No, the Board of Directors at the Children's Study Home is much different than the client population at the family center. The Board of Directors consists of highly educated white males, with high paying jobs, such as doctors and presidents of banks. This could cause problems because there could be difficulties with a board of Directors making choices about programs that involve people that are much different than themselves. Also, if they never get to know the clients, it is difficult to understanding the needs of the clients.

**12. What is the approximate % of agency staff who are members of the diverse cultural groups in your service area? In other words, to what extent does the agency's staff reflect the agency's client population?**

There are fourteen staff members and two interns that work directly at the family program. Five out of sixteen are Hispanic and those five speak fluent Spanish. Seven out of sixteen are African American, and four out of sixteen are Caucasian. Given these percentages, the ethnic and race of the clients served are depicted within the staff, however, if you look closer into other aspects of the clients' culture it is not depicted within the staff. For example, there are only three males that work at the Children's Study Home, and two of them are interns. Furthermore, none of the workers have been involved with DCF. However, about a third of the staff has been in poverty at some point in their life.

**13. Of the % in question 12, what are the roles within the agency of these staff, who are members of diverse groups? Approximately how many are clerical staff? Clinical or treatment staff? Administrative staff?**

Out of the sixteen staff members that work directly at the family program at the Children's Study Home, there is one supervisor and one assistant supervisor, which are both African American. Twelve out of sixteen are family support workers (5 Hispanic, 4 African Americans, 3 Caucasians), and two out of sixteen are interns (1 African American and 1 Caucasian). The administrative staff that does not have direct contact with clients is predominantly female Caucasians, with titles such as Executive Director, Director of Clinical Services, and Director of Children & Families.

**14. Does your work environment contain décor reflecting the culturally diverse groups in your service area?**

Yes, The Children's Study Home is decorated with two bulletin boards, usually filled with children's art work or upcoming events. In addition to the bulletin boards the decorations mainly consist of brochure holders that are filled with brochures about substance abuse, WIC, and teen parenting.

**15. Does your agency post signs and materials in languages other than English?**

Yes, a majority of the brochures and fliers are in both English and Spanish, which are the two languages the agency serves. However, there are certainly more English fliers and brochures than Spanish.

**16. Does your agency provide regular in-service training to improve cultural competence of staff? Explain. Is attendance required?**

Every Friday the agency holds a “mandatory” staff meeting, however, rarely is the topic about cultural competence. During these meeting the topics are usually describing difficult cases or situations, and brainstorming as a whole how to handle the difficult situation or case. Yet, every once in a while the staff meeting will consist of a presentation by an outside agency and some of that time could be devoted to the topic of cultural competence.

**17. What steps, if any, has your agency taken to improve cultural and linguistic competence throughout the organization?**

I do not feel that the Children’s Study Home is taking any steps to improve cultural competence; however Children’s Study Home has taken steps to improve linguistic competence by hiring a new bilingual staff member.

**18. What, if any, procedures does your agency have to recruit, hire, and retain staff that reflect the culturally diverse groups in your area? Staff that are culturally and linguistically competent?**

The agency does have procedures to recruit, hire, and retain staff that reflect the culturally diverse, for example they have to have a certain amount of bilingual staff and those bilingual staff actually have a different title stating that they are bilingual.

**19. Do treatment staff know and connect clients with natural networks of support when appropriate? (religious institutions, ethnic community groups, healers, etc.)**

Yes, to an extent the family support workers often make referral to other agencies that the clients could benefit from, such as Gandara. However, it is rare that family support workers would refer a client to a religious institution or a healer.

**20. Does your agency use treatment protocols that are adapted for culturally diverse groups? Explain.**

Similarly to what was said in question ten; each client has a specific treatment plan which has to be developed before starting the services and then a treatment review which must be completed at the end of services. However, other than the specific treatment plan and treatment review the protocol is not adapted depending on the client’s culture. Within the treatment plan and review there is also a section that discusses cultural barriers, such as language, transportation, or work. For example, if the client is working and misses a meeting, then that is one of their three absences they can have throughout the services even though a majority of the clients are of the working class and need to work to make money.

**After you have answered the above questions, please write a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of your field agency regarding cultural and linguistic competence. This should**

**be several paragraphs long, at least.**

The Children's Study Home as an agency has its strengths and its weaknesses regarding cultural and linguistic competence. About a third of the staff speaks Spanish making the staff available to address the needs of clients who do not speak English. In a social work setting this is crucial because many of your clients may not speak English. Being able to speak the language of the client relates closely with understanding the culture and being more connected with the client, especially since all of the Spanish speaking staff is Hispanic themselves.

Going along with being able to support both English and Spanish, Children's Study Homes has a well diverse staff. It is an even split between African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian. Having a wide range of cultures allows the staff to be assigned clients that are similar to themselves which can contribute to a stronger relationship in the future. However, there are aspects of diversity that the staff members do not have that the clients have, such as similar socio-economic class or educational level.

In my opinion the best strength of the Children's Study Home is that it has linguistic competence. All informed consent and agency policy forms are in English and Spanish, as well as workers that are diverse and speak the language. Having these forms in the appropriate language makes the client feel comfortable and wanted.

As a whole, the staff understands the clients' attitude toward receiving services involved with the Children's Study Home. It is clear that being involved with the Children Study Home services is a negative aspect of a client's life, and of course no one wants to be involved with DCF and have their child removed from the home. However, many of the clients are receiving services from Children's Study Homes because it is required by DCF to close out their case, and the staff at the Children's Study Home understands this and works with the client to make the services beneficial.

The last strength that the Children's Study Home does well is an individual treatment plan for every client. This allows the worker to personalize the treatment plan to fit the client's cultural needs, such as education level, racial and ethnic background, and socio-economic status. However, it is also a weakness of the Children's Study Home because not all of the workers take the time to make personal treatment plans, but instead use generic treatment plans for all of their clients.

While Children's Study Home does have some positive aspects regarding cultural and linguistic competence, they struggle with many aspects as well. For instance, many people that are employed by the Children's Study Home struggle with understanding the beliefs and customs of their clients, starting at the administrative level on down to the lower level workers. I believe this partly stems from the fact that not all employees at this agency have a social work degree. Although a person without a social work degree could be culturally competent, having a social work background is very beneficially when considering the topic of cultural competence. This agency's cultural incompetence begins with the mission statement that shows that the agency as a whole is unaware of the clients they serve.

The staff is well diverse when it comes to Spanish speaking clients; however, there is not any staff that speaks other languages other than Spanish or English. This is not a major issue because DCF only refers English and Spanish speaking clients to the Children's Study Home, however, if there were staff members that spoke other languages, DCF could refer a wider range of clients to Children's Study Homes.

Another issue that the Children's Study Home faces is the lack of male workers. Many fathers come through the service and personally ask to work with a male worker, however, that is

difficult when there is only one full time male worker, and two male interns.

The last weakness identified is the lack of diversity on the Board of Directors. Many of the members on the Board of Directors are highly educated white males, with high paying jobs, such as doctors and presidents of banks. This could pose some problems when the Board of Directors needs to make choices about programs that involve people that are much different than themselves. Also, if they never get to know the clients, it is difficult to understand the needs of the clients.

**When you have completed your summary, write a list of **FOUR Specific, Measurable, Achievable, and Realistic** steps your agency might consider taking within the next year to become more culturally and linguistically competent.** (Remember to choose steps that are realistic for your agency. For example, if your agency has been struggling with budget cuts, hiring additional staff would not be realistic.)

1. More cultural teaching

This could be completed monthly by mandating the staff members attend workshops that discuss cultural competence and the importance of learning about the clients' culture. Through these workshops, the staff could become aware of the importance of cultural competence and learn the basics about many different cultures. However, I believe there is only so much that can be learned in workshops when it comes to cultural competence and in order to fully understand the culture you work with you need to learn through experience.

2. Hire staff member that speak multiple languages

There is an appropriate amount of Spanish speaking staff within the agency to service the Spanish client population; however, there is not any other language other than Spanish and English that the staff speaks. I believe that it would be beneficial for the Children's Study Home to hire staff with more diverse languages because it would add another dimension to the services the agency could provide.

3. Board of Director diversity

The Board of Directors at the Children's Study Home does not have much diversity within it. The majority of the board is white males, with high paying jobs. I believe to understand what the client needs, the board of directors has to have a connection to the client, and that can only happen by talking to the client population or a sample of the client population.

4. More appropriate language used within the mission statement

It is crucial for the Children's Study Home to have a mission statement that the clients they serve can read and understand. There are multiple words within the mission statement that are difficult to understand and if you are not highly educated, which many of the parents within the family program are not, it is hard to understand. Also, it is only in English, when about thirty or forty percent of the clients only speak Spanish.