



Commitment to Intercultural Competence and Awareness

Introduction

Center For Family Services incorporates multi-cultural principles and practices throughout our continuum of care, providing programs and services that are linguistically appropriate, culturally relevant, and sensitive. Cultural competence and awareness is a critical component of workplace culture and service delivery.

Thanks to the strong work of our Intercultural Competency Committee, an organized group of staff dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion, Center For Family Services is a service provider offering an environment where everyone – including staff and those we serve - feels welcomed, comfortable, and respected. At Center For Family Services, everyone belongs.

Center For Family Services' guiding principle is "To honor diversity and to provide services with awareness of and sensitivity to the strengths and skills of diverse ethnicities and cultures, languages, socio- economic classes, disabilities, religions, genders, and sexual orientations," (Center For Family Services, Goals & Values).

Center For Family Services' mission is to support and empower individuals, families and communities to achieve a better life through vision, hope and strength. Our vision is for all people to lead capable, responsible, fulfilled lives in strong families and healthy communities. This mission and vision rest on a foundation that prioritizes the identification, development and provision of culturally accessible and responsive services.

Center For Family Services respects the dignity of each individual. Through collaborative and culturally responsive service delivery, Center For Family Services honors individuals and families as experts in their own lives. Center For Family Services' Board of Trustees made a commitment to intercultural competence, awareness, diversity and inclusion through the adoption and approval of the following policy statement that "policies and practices recognize, respect and respond to the unique, culturally-defined needs of persons and families within its service population."

Center For Family Services stands against all racism and implicit bias that exists within many of systems that are supposed to ensure all people have access to fair judicial treatment, educational success, quality health care, food security, housing, and socioeconomic mobility. Center For Family Services acknowledges that societal inequities are real and barriers to people and communities working to reach their full potential. Center For Family Services advocates for the change that is necessary to bring social justice to our communities and maintains a commitment to continued efforts to keep a conversation going about social justice, inequity, systemic racism, and cultural diversity.

Center For Family Services established an Intercultural Competency Committee in 2007, as part of a commitment to intercultural competence and awareness. The committee is staff-driven and comprised of a diverse staff from across the organization, inclusive of staff with varying backgrounds, experiences, and education, with support and oversight from the executive team. The mission statement of the Intercultural Competence Committee is “to foster mutual respect of staff and clients through broadening cultural awareness of our ever changing community.”

The Intercultural Competence Committee championed the advancement of intercultural awareness across Center For Family Services. Following the launch of the Intercultural Competency Committee, Center For Family Services implemented an Intercultural Competence Plan in 2008. The committee reviews and updates the plan on an annual basis, as part of a strong and ongoing commitment to self-reflection and growth around cultural awareness and development of cultural competence. Additionally, the committee plans ongoing opportunities for learning and training and a platform for growth. Over the last decade the committee expanded to include sub-committees with the following focus areas:

- ICC Plan
- Training
- LGBTQ+ Taskforce
- Racial Justice and Equity for Black and Brown People Taskforce
- Communications, Community and Consumer Service Engagement

The practices and standards incorporated across Center For Family Services create inclusive, culturally competent, and sensitive environments for all clients, staff, stakeholders, and community members.

Intercultural Competency Welcome Statement

Staff receive our cultural competency welcome statement upon hire, and clients receive the statement upon program entry.

Center For Family Services welcomes individuals:

- From all cultures and ethnicities.
- Who speak and use all languages including American Sign Language.
- With all forms of abilities, visible or invisible.
- Of all ages and stages of life.
- Of all gender identities and gender expression.
- Of all sexualities.
- Of all religious and spiritual backgrounds and those with no religious or spiritual connection.
- Of all marital status, with or without children through the journey of adoption, foster, kinship, or birth.

Center For Family Services believes in:

- Respecting the dignity and worth of each individual by providing professional services with compassion and humility.
- Ethical service practices that maintain quality, excellence, and highlight the unique contributions of our team members and individuals receiving our services.
- Honoring and celebrating ethnic, community, and family culture and diversity as critical components of family success.
- Taking a leadership role with other community members in planning and advocating to improve social conditions on a local, state, and national level.
- Holding ourselves professionally accountable for our effectiveness by measuring the outcomes and impact of agency services.
- Creating a work environment that honors our staff as our most valuable resource, ensures access to professional development, and views self-care as an essential part of a staff member's daily work routine.

Recruitment, Hiring, and Onboarding Practices

Center For Family Services prioritizes diversity, and linguistic and cultural competence as important factors that impact hiring, training and program practices. Staff represent and are knowledgeable about the cultures and communities they serve.

"Everyone Belongs" messaging is displayed throughout employee spaces at Center For Family Services, reinforcing important messaging that celebrates diversity and inclusion. Staff are introduced to our "Everyone Belongs" culture and our intercultural competency welcome statement during onboarding.

Training and Professional Development

Staff participate in trainings and professional development activities to equip them with the tools necessary to meet the growing and changing needs in New Jersey communities. Training topics include unconscious bias, cultural intelligence, team building, women in the workforce, and generational diversity.

Additionally, Center For Family Services hosts a well-coordinated set of activities throughout the year to engage staff in a variety of learning opportunities focused on diversity, equity and inclusion, including:

- Lunch & Learn Events – educational sessions providing staff the opportunity to listen to co-workers and learn from each other as we pursue just, equitable and inclusive environments.
- Town Hall Sessions – these virtual sessions take place several times each year and are led by diversity consultants. The well-attended sessions provide an opportunity for staff to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
- Staff Development Summit – an annual all-staff training focused on diversity, equity and inclusion.
- DEI Resource Tool for Supervision – the new tool, launched in 2022, supports supervisors in effective staff supervision that includes tools and resources to support enhanced skills in these areas: trust and accountability, empathy, self-reflection, awareness, recognition of privilege and bias, peer education.
- Intercultural Competency Webpage – a hub of resources and training opportunities available to all staff at Center For Family Services.

Standards & Indicators

Center For Family Services adopted the National Association of Social Workers' Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence (NASW, 2003). These standards are agency wide :

Standard 1. Ethics and Values Social workers, and all Center For Family Services staff, shall function in accordance with the values, ethics, and standards of the NASW (2008) Code of Ethics. Cultural competence requires self-awareness, cultural humility, and the commitment to understanding and embracing culture as central to effective practice.

Standard 2. Self-Awareness Social workers, and all Center For Family Services staff, shall demonstrate an appreciation of their own cultural identities and those of others. Social workers must also be aware of their own privilege and power and must acknowledge the impact of this privilege and power in their work with and on behalf of clients. Social workers will also demonstrate cultural humility and sensitivity to the dynamics of power and privilege in all areas of social work.

Standard 3. Cross-Cultural Knowledge Social workers, and all Center For Family Services staff, shall possess and continue to develop specialized knowledge and understanding that is inclusive of, but not limited to, the history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions such as race and ethnicity; immigration and refugee status; tribal groups; religion and spirituality; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; social class; and mental or physical abilities of various cultural groups.

Standard 4. Cross-Cultural Skills Social workers, and all Center For Family Services staff, will use a broad range of skills (micro, mezzo, and macro) and techniques that demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the importance of culture in practice, policy, and research.

Standard d 5. Service Delivery Social workers, and all Center For Family Services staff, shall be knowledgeable about and skillful in the use of services, resources, and institutions and be available to serve multicultural communities. They shall be able to make culturally appropriate referrals within both formal and informal networks and shall be cognizant of, and work to address, service gaps affecting specific cultural groups.

Standard 6. Empowerment and Advocacy Social workers, and all Center For Family Services staff, shall be aware of the impact of social systems, policies, practices, and programs on multicultural client populations, advocating for, with, and on behalf of multicultural clients and client populations whenever appropriate. Social workers, and all Center For Family Services staff, should also participate in the development and implementation of policies and practices that empower and advocate for, and include, marginalized and oppressed populations.

Standard 7. Diverse Workforce Social workers, and all Center For Family Services staff, shall support and advocate for recruitment, admissions and hiring, and retention efforts in social work programs and organizations to ensure diversity within the profession.

Standard 8. Professional Education Social workers, and all Center For Family Services staff, shall advocate for, develop, and participate in professional education and training programs that advance cultural competence within the profession. Social workers, and all Center For Family Services staff, should embrace cultural competence as a focus of lifelong learning.

Standard 9. Language and Communication Social workers, and all Center For Family Services staff, shall provide and advocate for effective communication with clients of all cultural groups, including people of limited English proficiency or low literacy skills, people who are blind or have low vision, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and people with disabilities (Goode & Jones, 2009).

Standard 10. Leadership to Advance Cultural Competence Social workers, and all Center For Family Services staff, shall be change agents who demonstrate the leadership skills to work effectively with multicultural groups in agencies, organizational settings, and communities. Social workers, and all Center For Family Services staff, should also demonstrate responsibility for advancing cultural competence within and beyond their organizations, helping to challenge structural and institutional oppression and build and sustain diverse and inclusive institutions and communities.

References

National Association of Social Workers. (2003). Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice. Washington D.C.: National Association of Social Workers

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