



September 8, 2003
DHS Standards and Guidelines for Cultural Competency
and Gender Specific Services
DHS Diversity Development Coordinating Council (DDCC)

Introduction:

These standards and guidelines were developed over a year ago by the Diversity Development Coordinating Council (DDCC) in order to assist the DHS Cabinet in implementing cultural competency as an organizational practice. These standards are consistent with the cultural competency requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The standards are also consistent with the ones developed by the Partners for Children and Families (Senate Bill 555) to be used by state and local agencies. Recently the DDCC amended these standards to include sectors previously left out: people with disabilities, gender specific services, and sexual orientation. These standards were approved by the DHS Cabinet September 2003.

Section I:

Definition of Cultural Competence:

Cultural competence refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, disabilities, religions, genders, sexual orientation and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each.

Operationally defined, 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.

Section II:

DHS Cultural Competency Standards and Guidelines:

- 1) DHS ensures that clients/consumers receive effective, understandable, and respectful services that are provided in a manner compatible with their cultural beliefs and practices, preferred language and/or alternate format, physical or cognitive ability, gender and sexual orientation. **Strategies: 5 & 6**
- 2) DHS implements strategies to recruit, retain and promote a diverse staff at all levels of the organization and leadership that are representative of the population being served and the demographic characteristics of the service area. **Strategies: 1, 2, 3**
- 3) DHS ensures that staff at all levels and across all disciplines receive ongoing education and training in culturally, linguistically and gender appropriate service delivery, policy, and planning, and comply with practice and standards for workers. **Strategies: 4, 7, 8**

- 4) DHS offers and provides competent language assistance services, including bilingual staff and interpreter services, at no cost to each client/consumer with limited English proficiency at all points of contact, in a timely manner during all hours of operation. Language standards also apply to individuals with speech or hearing disabilities. **Strategies: 5, 6**
- 5) DHS provides to clients/consumers in their preferred language or alternate format both verbal offers and written notices informing them of their right to receive language assistance services. **Strategies: 5, 6**
- 6) DHS assures the competency of language assistance provided to limited English proficient clients/consumers by interpreters and bilingual staff. Family and friends should not be used to provide interpretation services. These standards also apply to people with speech or hearing disabilities. **Strategies: 5, 6**
- 7) DHS makes available easily understood client-related materials and posts signage in the languages of the commonly encountered groups and/or groups represented in the service area. **Strategies: 5, 6**
- 8) DHS develops, implements, and promotes a written strategic plan that outlines clear goals, policies, operational plans, and management accountability/oversight mechanisms to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services. **Strategy: 8**
- 9) DHS offices conduct initial and ongoing organizational self-assessments of cultural competency related activities and gender-specific programming and are encouraged to integrate cultural and linguistic competence-related and gender-specific measures into their internal audits, performance improvement programs, client satisfaction assessments, and outcomes-based evaluations. **Strategies: 5, 6**
- 10) DHS offices conduct an initial and ongoing organizational self-assessment for disability-related barrier identification and removal. This includes developing an action plan to remedy identified barriers to employment and/or access to DHS client services. **Strategies: 5, 6**
- 11) DHS ensures that data on the individual client's/consumer's racial, ethnicity, gender and primary language or alternate format are collected in client records, confidentially maintained, integrated into the data information systems and periodically updated. **Strategy: not held**
- 12) DHS maintains current demographic, cultural and service delivery profiles of the community being served as well as a needs assessment to accurately plan for and implement services that respond to the cultural, linguistic, and gender characteristics of the service area. **Strategies: 5, 6**
- 13) DHS develops participatory, collaborative partnerships with communities and utilizes a variety of formal and informal mechanisms to facilitate community and client/consumer involvement in designing and implementing the DHS service delivery system and cultural competency standards. **Strategy: 7**
- 14) DHS ensures that conflict and grievance resolution processes are culturally, linguistically, and gender sensitive/appropriate and capable of identifying, preventing, and resolving conflicts or complaints by clients/consumers or community groups/organizations. **Strategy: 8**

- 15) DHS regularly makes available to the public information about their progress and successful innovations in implementing the Cultural Competency Standards and to provide staff, and the public notice in their communities about the availability of this information. **Strategy: 8**

Section III:

DHS Cultural Competency Practice and Gender Specific Services Expectations

Strategies 4, 6, and 7 apply to each of these standards listed below

Standard 1. Ethics and Values

DHS employees shall serve the public in a manner that recognizes how personal and professional values may conflict with or accommodate the needs of diverse clients.

Standard 2. Self-Awareness

DHS employees shall develop an understanding of their own personal and cultural values and beliefs as a first step in appreciating the importance of multicultural identities in the lives of people.

Standard 3. Cross-Cultural Knowledge

DHS employees shall have and continue to develop specialized knowledge and understanding about the history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions of major client groups served.

Standard 4. Cross-Cultural Skills

DHS employees shall use appropriate methodological approaches, skills and techniques that reflect an understanding of the role of culture in the helping process.

Standard 5. Service Delivery

DHS employees shall be knowledgeable about and skillful in accessing services available in the community and broader society and be able to make appropriate referrals for their diverse clients

Standard 6. Empowerment and Advocacy

DHS employees shall be aware of the effect of social policies and programs on diverse client populations, advocating for and with clients whenever appropriate.

Standard 7. Diverse Workforce

DHS employees shall support the DHS policies and programs designed to recruit, hire and retain a diverse workforce at all levels of the organization.

Standard 8. Professional Education

DHS employees shall participate in educational and training programs that help advance cultural competency in the delivery of DHS services.

Standard 9. Language Diversity

DHS employees shall seek to provide and advocate for the provision of information, referrals, and services in the language appropriate to the client, which may include the use of interpreters.

Standard 10. Cross-Cultural Leadership

DHS employees shall strive to be leaders in state government in the provision of cultural competent services to diverse client/consumer populations.

Developed by the DHS Diversity Development and Coordinating Council (DDCC), 2003

Approved by DHS Cabinet September 2003