

ACHA Guidelines

Cultural Competency Statement

Cultural competency refers to the capacity for an individual, an organization, or an institution to respond to the unique needs of populations whose cultures are different from that which might be referred to as “dominant.” It involves a long-term, developmental process that moves beyond “cultural awareness” (the knowledge about a particular group primarily gained through media resources and workshops) and “cultural sensitivity” (knowledge as well as some level of direct experience with a cultural group other than one’s own). This process is an engaging, life-long journey of expanding one’s horizons, thinking critically about power and oppression, and behaving appropriately.

In order to provide opportunities for continued development and to steadily improve the cultural competency of campus health professionals, the American College Health Association (ACHA), as stated in its Non-Discrimination Policy, “supports all initiatives to create a healthy campus climate guided by the values of cultural inclusion, respect, equality, and equity. Such a climate is essential to college health.”

The membership of ACHA therefore commits to:

- Cultural inclusion: being an inclusive and accessible organization by encouraging its members to be proactive, sensitive, and responsive to the needs of a diverse and changing student population.
- Cultural respect: acknowledging and understanding the role that differing systems of beliefs, values, rules, and customs may play in the partnerships we have with students and colleagues.
- Equality: acknowledging that different cultures and groups expressed in the identities and perspectives of our colleagues and the students

we care for are entitled to equal respect and consideration.

- Equity: making health information and resources equally accessible to all for whom we provide health services.

Through these efforts it is possible to enhance our services, foster our own personal and professional development, and advance the health and learning of all students as follows:

Individual Level

Culturally competent individuals have a mixture of beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, experience, and skills that help them to establish trust and rapport in effective communication with others. The following are representative of culturally competent individuals:

1. Beliefs and attitudes that demonstrate:
 - an awareness and sensitivity to personal cultural heritage
 - a respect for and value of different heritages
 - an awareness of personal values and biases and how they may affect the perception of other cultures
 - comfort with differences that exist between personal culture and other cultures’ values and beliefs
2. Knowledge and experience that demonstrate:
 - a good understanding of the power structure in society and how non-dominant groups are treated
 - specific efforts made to acquire knowledge and information about the particular group(s) one is working with
 - the recognition of institutional barriers that prevent members of underrepresented/

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underserved groups from using organizational and societal resources

3. Skills that demonstrate:

- the ability to send and receive verbal and nonverbal messages accurately and appropriately
- the ability to intervene appropriately and advocate on behalf of individuals from different cultures (i.e., serve as an ally)

Institution Level

Each member institution should commit to the cultural competency of campus health professionals by implementing, strengthening, and supporting a variety of activities including but not limited to the following:

1. Promote a diverse and inclusive campus through:
 - assessment of the campus climate with regard to multicultural inclusion and sensitivity
 - development and publication of a policy of inclusion
 - promotion of cultural competency as a skill required for newly hired campus health professionals
2. Provide campus health professionals with meaningful opportunities to enhance their cultural competency skills and opportunities.
3. Add cultural competency as one of the essential skills reviewed in performance evaluations.
4. Ensure compliance with all appropriate federal, state, and local legislation.
5. Build strong connections throughout the campus to promote college health by:
 - creating opportunities for members of historically underrepresented/underserved groups to interact and engage with campus health professionals
 - collaborating with student affairs/life on workshops to teach students, staff, and faculty how to promote inclusion

- reviewing campus publications, including online sites, for cultural sensitivity and inclusivity
- infusing issues of power and social justice into health-related curriculum and co-curriculum

Association Level

As a national organization, comprised of individuals and member-institutions, the American College Health Association is the principal advocate and leadership organization for college and university health. Over the past four decades, the enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities has continued to rise and has broadened in the diverse profile of students. As an organization ACHA, its affiliates, sections, and committees/coalitions/task forces are deeply committed to furthering its collective growth and development in cultural competence. Toward that commitment, the association will:

1. Include programming facilitated by thoughtful and informed professionals that specifically address issues of cultural competency as they relate to the following areas:
 - building stronger, more mutually respectful connections between clinical health, mental health, and health promotion
 - providing significant integration of the services developed within the sphere of college health into the broader work of student affairs/student life
 - recruiting, hiring, retaining, and promoting a diverse college health staff
 - identifying and understanding the synergies between college students' health and issues of social justice
 - creating organizational structures and communication/decision-making processes which promote empowerment and inclusivity
 - serving as an ally to a diverse institutional community
 - resolving conflicts and grievances effectively

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2. Provide association leaders (Board of Directors, affiliate officers, section officers, committee/coalition chairs, etc.) with meaningful opportunities to enhance their cultural competency skills with regard to “age; gender identity, including transgender; marital status; physical size; psychological/physical/learning disability; race/ethnicity; religious, spiritual or cultural identity; sex; sexual orientation; socioeconomic status; or veteran status” (ACHA Non-Discrimination Policy).
3. Facilitate the ongoing review of and advocacy for inclusivity and cultural sensitivity with regard to student health insurance/benefits programs.
4. Highlight news topics and solicit the regular publication of articles on cultural competency and multiculturalism in the ACHA Action newsletter, the *Journal of American College Health*, affiliate newsletters, section newsletters, or other publications.
5. Review all ACHA documents and publications, including the ACHA and Affiliate Bylaws, Section Articles of Operation, website, and co-sponsorship activities, for cultural sensitivity and inclusivity.
6. Work with other associations/organizations to ensure the infusion of cultural competency standards.

References

The following references were used in the creation of this document:

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- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Cultural Competence for Evaluators: A Guide for Alcohol and Other Drug Use Prevention Practitioners Working with Ethnic/Racial Communities*. Rockville, MD: Office for Substance Abuse Prevention, Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration, DHHS Publication No. (ADM) 92-1884, 1992.

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