Our Goals

To improve our:
- Understanding of Latino cultures, values, traditions, and beliefs
- Communication skills with Spanish-speaking clients
- Ability to apply this understanding and skills to:
  - Child safety and risk assessment
  - Selection of services
  - Comprehensive case planning
  - Placement and permanency planning

Topics

- Cultural Norms
- Strategies in Overcoming Language Barriers
- Applying Cultural Competence
Many of California’s Children Are Latino

Nearly 44% of children under 18 years are Hispanic/Latino.

Many Latino Children Live in Poverty

In California, 58% of Hispanic/Latino children live in poverty, compared to 24% of Caucasian children.

Many Maltreated Children Are Latino

Over 41% of maltreated children in California are Hispanic/Latino, compared to 32% Caucasian.
Overrepresented in Foster Care

Hispanic/Latino children are overrepresented in foster care, and stay in foster care an average of 26 months longer than Caucasian children.


Overrepresented in the Juvenile Justice System

- In L.A. County, compared to Caucasian youth:
  - Arrested 2.3 times as often
  - Prosecuted as adults 2.4 times as often
  - Imprisoned 7.3 times as often

1) Institute for Children, Youth, and Families, Michigan State University, 2002

Harsher Treatment in the Juvenile Justice System

- Longer incarceration than Caucasian youths convicted of similar crimes: 5 months on average
- Anti-gang laws mandate harsher sentencing, although evidence of gang affiliation may be weak
- System fails to provide adequate bilingual services or ensure the cultural competency of staff

1) Institute for Children, Youth, and Families, Michigan State University, 2002
Not Enough Bilingual Child-Welfare Professionals

Percentage of bilingual LCSWs in California does not approach the percent of Hispanic/Latinos in the general population, much less the population receiving child welfare services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Population Hispanic/Latino</th>
<th>Bilingual LCSWs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tulare</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madera</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
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The Need for Cultural Competency

Child welfare staff who have not been trained in cultural differences too often rely on personal bias when deciding whether a child should be removed from the home.


What is Cultural Competence?
**To Be Culturally Competent Is To:**

- Be aware of your own values, biases, preconceived notions, and personal limitations.
- Actively attempt to understand the world view of your culturally different clients without negative judgments.
- Actively engage in developing and practicing appropriate intervention strategies and skills for working with your culturally different clients.

1) Sue and Sue (1990)

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**Challenges of Developing Cultural Competence**

Requires personal reflection on your own attitudes and biases.

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**Challenges of Developing Cultural Competence**

Ongoing commitment required for continuous improvement.
Challenges of Developing Cultural Competence

May require revisions to programs, policies, procedures; shifts in organizational culture

Benefits of Developing Cultural Competence

- Better understand and respond to the needs of the population you serve
- Ensure fairness in provision of child welfare services to all children and families
- Make clients feel respected and better served

Benefits of Developing Cultural Competence

- Attract a larger and more diverse pool of job applicants for openings
- Become more desirable to funders
- Build better relationships with service providers
What attitudes and behaviors have you observed?

Family-Centeredness: “Familismo”

- Close relationships within large extended family, which may include non-relatives
- Individual needs may be secondary
- Family gatherings and rituals are important
Family-Centeredness: “Familismo”

- Defined hierarchy within family

Family-Centeredness: “Familismo”

- Marriage and parenthood is commonly entered into early in life
- Adults remain geographically close
- Family is source of both support and stress

“Fictive Kin” and Extra-Household Networks

- Godparents (padrino/madrina)
- Other close friends (compadre/comadre) and co-workers
- Neighbors
- Networks may be bi-national
Family Privacy

- Turn to extended family for advice and assistance, or possibly priest
- Fear of “shaming” family before outsiders may inhibit disclosure of domestic violence or sexual abuse

Gender Issues

- Gender roles tend to be traditional
- Machismo: authoritarianism, control, pressure to protect and provide for family

Gender Issues

- Marianismo: pressure to be perfect wife and mother and uphold “status quo”
- Mothers have special status
Sexuality

- Sexual matters usually not discussed before children
- The age of first sexual activity for females may be lower in some Spanish-speaking cultures

Sexuality

- A large age difference between a young female and her boyfriend or husband may be considered acceptable

Sexuality

- A greater stigma is attached to homosexuality
Religion and Spirituality

- Religion and church may be of profound importance
- Fatalism and emphasis on self-sacrifice may cause passive acceptance of abuse
- Divorce carries greater stigma

Religion and Spirituality

- Disease or disability may be regarded as judgment of God, or result of a curse
- May rely on mystical cures, folk remedies, or spiritual healing

Distrust of Government Entities

- Bad experience in country of origin
- Discrimination experienced in this country
- Lack of knowledge about U.S. governmental systems
- Concerns about immigration status
Common Places of Origin

- Cuba
- Puerto Rico
- Mexico
- Central America
- South America
- Spain

Immigrants in California

- At least 1 in 4 Californians are foreign-born
- More than half of these come from Mexico or Central America

2000 Census Data

Learning About Your Client

- Generation
- Time living in U.S.
- Reason for immigrating
- Country of origin
Learning About Your Client

- Race and ethnicity
- Education

Learning About Your Client

- Extended or nuclear family?
- Who lives in the home?
- Who has cared for children?

Your Client’s Perspective

- What does your client perceive to be the problem?
- What does your client perceive as obstacles?
- What does your client consider to be personal and family strengths? What is working in the family?
- Who does your client turn to for help, or when someone is sick?
How have you made your environment more welcoming?

Physical Environment

- Some studies attribute underutilization of social services to doubt about being understood.
- A physical environment that reflects the national groups and communities it serves may facilitate engagement.

1) Inclan & Ferran, 1990
Cultural Signifiers
Symbols create a sense of familiarity and can increase trust and confidence:

- Maps, photographs and artwork

Cultural Signifiers
- Signs in Spanish

Culturally relevant music

Cultural Signifiers
- Games, magazines, and books in Spanish
- Dolls of different skin colors and features
- Toys, cooking utensils, etc. with cultural significance
Brainstorm in Pairs

- Imagine that you are accompanying an experienced social worker on a successful home visit with a Spanish-speaking family.
- What **non-verbal** behaviors does the social worker use to help establish rapport?
- Jot your ideas down on a piece of paper. See how many you can think of in one minute.

Establishing Rapport

- Demonstrate warmth and compassion
- Accept offered hospitality
- Be aware of nonverbal communication

Establishing Rapport

- Take time for casual conversation
- Convey respect for the family
  - Use titles
  - Pronounce names correctly
  - Do not Anglicize names
Establishing Rapport

- Deal with immigration status concerns
- Explain the problem and why it is important
- Educate about the system and process
  - Do not assume literacy
  - Assure confidentiality

Have you tried to communicate in a foreign language?

How can you communicate better with English learners?
Communicating Better in English (or Spanish)

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Use a limited vocabulary
- Avoid slang, jargon, and idiomatic expressions
- Use a bridge to begin a new topic
- Use gestures and visual aids
- Paraphrase what you are told

Working With an Interpreter

- Don’t allow family members to interpret, especially children!
- Discuss roles and expectations beforehand
- Introduce the interpreter and have the interpreter explain his/her role

- Allow time to establish rapport
- Use short units of speech
- Set up room to minimize distraction
- Make eye contact with client
Choosing an Interpreter

- Enlist the help of your Spanish-speaking staff members
- Interpreter must:
  - Be as free as possible from bias or paternalistic attitudes
  - Be familiar with child-welfare terms
  - Understand the boundaries of role
  - Emphasize the need for confidentiality

Applying Cultural Competence

Don’t Confuse Poverty With Abuse/Neglect

- Indicators of “neglect” may actually reveal need
- Conditions may be crowded, with extended family and others living in the home
- Children may reside with someone other than parents
Don’t Confuse Poverty With Abuse/Neglect

- Children may share beds
- Crowded living conditions may cause premature knowledge of adult sexual behavior

Beliefs About Health, Disease, and Disability

- Some less-educated and recent immigrants may attribute disease and disability to religious or supernatural causes
- Some may blame themselves for causing illness or disability
- Some seek religious, supernatural, or folk cures

Relation of Health Practices to Risk Assessment

- Folk-medicine practices such as cupping and massage may leave bruises that can be misinterpreted as abuse
- Needed medical treatment may not be sought
- May self-medicate with prescription medications purchased over-the-counter abroad
Cultural Norms of Discipline
- Types of punishment regarded as abuse here may be regarded as normal in place of origin
- Laws on child abuse and neglect are different in different countries

Youth Gangs
- Present in U.S. since 1700s
- Response of immigrant ethnic groups to poverty, discrimination, victimization, struggle for survival
- Historically Irish, Italian, Jewish, or Polish
- Currently mainly Latino and African-American
- Serious social problem in many communities

Gang Sub-Culture
- Form of resistance to mainstream culture
- Members may feel they are preserving cultural identity
- An alternative family: belonging, acceptance, protection
- Secretive, exciting, enhances status
- May be multi-generational
Risks of Gang Association

-Heightened risk of:
  - Criminal activity
  - Substance abuse
  - Violence
- Family members also may become targets
- Creates obstacles to treatment:
  - Divided loyalty between family and gang
  - Secretiveness
  - Resistance to change

Working With Gang-Affiliated Clients/Families

- Remain objective and non-judgmental
- Educate:
  - What benefits do you get from the gang?
  - How will it affect your future?
  - What are the risks of gang activity to you and your family?

How can you assess literacy?
Case Planning Issues
- Language
- Literacy
- Educational & mental health needs of children
- Transportation
- Extended family members

Case Planning Issues
- Immigration status
  - Eligibility for low-income housing
  - Undocumented teens in foster care
- Incarceration of parent
  - Deportation on release

Kinship Care
- Preferred by California law
- Less traumatizing and more stable
- Common type placement for Latino children
- Extended family and “fictive kin” expand pool of placement opportunities
**Kinship Care: Possible Drawbacks**

- Kin ask for and receive less government assistance
- Parent may pursue reunification less vigorously
- May not see the need for or want adoption; may fear hurting birth parents

**What makes a service a good choice for Spanish-speakers?**

**How do you find out about potential services?**
Choosing Culturally Relevant Services

- Work with people from your area. Directions are on page 27 of the Participant’s Manual.
- Step One: Brainstorm a list of all the agencies to which you refer clients for services. List them. (5 minutes)
- Step Two: Rate each agency from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) based on how culturally relevant it is for Latino and Spanish-speaking clients. (5 minutes)
- Look for areas of strength and weakness.

Instructions for Scenarios

- Read each scenario and note your answers to each of the questions. You may work together with someone at your table if you prefer.
- Be prepared to participate in a group discussion of the scenarios.

Case Planning Guidelines

- Make efforts to level the balance of power between your client and yourself.
- Be thorough. Don’t just talk to family members with whom it is easiest to communicate.
- Learn about client’s history, which may affect current behavior.
Case Planning Guidelines

- Ask about extended family or friends who may be able to provide support.
- Be aware of how poverty, overcrowding, and different health practices can mimic symptoms of abuse or neglect.

Case Planning Guidelines

- Focus on family’s strengths, not just deficiencies. Apply strengths to solving problems.
- Don’t excuse actual abuse on the grounds that it is a cultural practice.

Action Planning

- Find the worksheet on page 32 of the Participant’s Manual.
- Make a list of things you can do personally and with your agency to increase your cultural competence.
- Try to include items in each of the 5 suggested areas.