



***Cultural Competency***  
***Learning Matrix***

# cultural competency

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Academically, cultural competence is defined as a **set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies** that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (Cross et al., 1989; Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991).

In practice, cultural competence is obtaining cultural information and then applying that knowledge. In our society, counselors don't have to travel to faraway places to encounter all sorts of cultural differences, such as ethnic customs, traditions and financial practices.

It is the responsibility of each foreclosure counselor to be culturally competent. Beyond cultural awareness or sensitivity, cultural competence emphasizes the idea of **effectively operating** in different cultural contexts, and altering practices to reach different cultural groups. Cultural knowledge, sensitivity, and awareness do not include this concept. Although they imply understanding of cultural similarities and differences, they do not include action or structural change.

Cultural competency is not merely knowledge of cultural differences. It is a way of thinking, speaking, and relating to people entirely within the context of their cultural background. Counselors must make culture competency a **part of how they do their work**.

There is no simple way to eliminate personal bias. However, there are a number of ways that one can begin to do so, beginning with developing intellectual empathy and intellectual humility. The first requires imagining yourself in another's situation and trying to reconstruct their viewpoint and reasoning based solely upon their ideas and experience and not your own. The second requires extensive experience in identifying the extent of your own ignorance in a wide variety of subjects.

Be aware of your own fallibility:

- Accept that everyone has subconscious biases, and temper reactive judgments accordingly
- Adopt an ego-sensitive and humble stance
- Recall previous beliefs that you once held strongly but now reject
- Realize you have blind spots

Skills and knowledge are gained through education, training, practice and self-reflection. Personal attributes can be developed through exposure to the positive aspects of other cultures, actively exploring and participating within other cultures as well as asking questions in a respectful, non-threatening manner.



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This tool helps build self-awareness regarding areas where biases may interfere with being an effective foreclosure intervention counselor. The results of the assessment will not be shared. The point is to reach a better understanding of your barriers to cultural competency.

The first column asks questions that require thought and consideration. Provide your answers in the middle column to each question. When you have answered all the questions, review your answers and consider what they have taught you about yourself. Based on your reflections, consider what you can do to improve your cultural competence.

### Cultural Competence Awareness Matrix

Question	Your Response	What did you learn? What steps can you take based on this knowledge to improve your cultural competence?
<p>1. Were other cultures, races or ethnicities talked about in your childhood home?</p> <p>Think about particular incidents.</p> <p>Were they tense or relaxed conversations?</p> <p>Who initiated discussions and who resisted them?</p>		
<p>2. If there were no conversations in your childhood home about other cultures, races or ethnicities, what did you learn from the silence?</p>		

Question	Your Response	What did you learn? What steps can you take based on this knowledge to improve your cultural competence?
<p>3. Was there conflict within your family because of other cultures, races or ethnicities (over integration, immigration, interracial or interfaith dating, music, busing)? How was the conflict handled? What did you learn from the conflict?</p>		
<p>4. Were there people of other cultures, races or ethnicities who cared for you, your parents, building, house or yard? If so, how were they treated? How did their presence and your family's attitudes toward them influence you?</p>		

<b>Question</b>	<b>Your Response</b>	<b>What did you learn? What steps can you take based on this knowledge to improve your cultural competence?</b>
5. As a child, what stories, TV shows or books influenced you the most in your attitudes about people of other cultures, races or ethnicities? What do you carry with you from that exposure?		
6. Now that you've considered impacts of your childhood on how you may view people of other cultures, races or ethnicities, what have you discovered about yourself?		

Question	Your Response	What did you learn? What steps can you take based on this knowledge to improve your cultural competence?
<p>7. How would you describe your comfort level of talking to people of other cultures, races or ethnicities about their culture, race or ethnicity?</p>		
<p>8. How many conversations have you had in the last six months with persons from a different culture where you discussed racial and ethnic differences? Who initiated the conversations? What did you learn? How did you feel when the conversation ended?</p>		

Question	Your Response	What did you learn? What steps can you take based on this knowledge to improve your cultural competence?
<p>9. Do you have a strong awareness of other cultures, races or ethnicities that your organization serves? Do you know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to build trust?</li> <li>• Unique communication styles?</li> <li>• How families interact and live with each other?</li> <li>• Religious or cultural customs and holidays and what the customs and holidays celebrate?</li> <li>• Any words in their language if it isn't English?</li> <li>• How they make decisions?</li> <li>• The types of food that is common?</li> <li>• About clothing or other personal styles that are dictated by their culture, race or ethnicity?</li> <li>• The role of men and women?</li> </ul>		



Question	Your Response	What did you learn? What steps can you take based on this knowledge to improve your cultural competence?
<p>10. What makes you the most uncomfortable about learning about other cultures?</p>		
<p>11. Do you have friends that are from a different culture, race or ethnicity than yours? Have they been to your home? Have you been to their home? How are your homes different? How are they alike?</p>		

Question	Your Response	What did you learn? What steps can you take based on this knowledge to improve your cultural competence?
12. How have you tried to learn about other cultures, races or ethnicities? Was it successful? What other ways might be effective?		
13. What do you think about a person who may have limited English skills? Do you consider that they may be proficient in their own language? What is your tone and demeanor when speaking with them?		

Question	Your Response	What did you learn? What steps can you take based on this knowledge to improve your cultural competence?
<p>14. Have you attended events in the communities you serve that could build awareness of their culture, race or ethnicity? If you have what did you learn? If you haven't, what is keeping you from attending?</p>		
<p>15. If you could ask one question of any person of a different culture, race or ethnicity than yourself, what would it be?</p>		

Other assessments can be located at

[http://www.castonline.ilstu.edu/hurd/KNR378/Assignments/Diversity/individual\\_diversity\\_assessment.htm](http://www.castonline.ilstu.edu/hurd/KNR378/Assignments/Diversity/individual_diversity_assessment.htm)

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"I took the one less traveled by, and  
that has made all the **difference.**"  
~Robert Frost

*Cairns are used for wayfinding.  
They mark a path of progress and  
locate that which matters most.*



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*Vision. Integrity. Results.*