

**GUIDANCE ON CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND DIVERSITY**  
**A Guide to Implementing NCA Standard:**  
**Cultural Competency and Diversity for**  
**Children's Advocacy Centers**

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# **Introduction**

## **History of Development of the Guidance on Cultural Competency and Diversity**

Early in the development of this guidance on cultural competency and diversity, members of the Board of Directors of National Children’s Alliance (NCA) recognized that NCA and its Board of Directors ability to embrace the values of cultural competency and diversity in a meaningful and lasting way was impacted by several factors:

- A lack of objective assessment of where NCA was with regard to cultural competency and diversity
- A commitment by the Board of Directors to a positive change in regard to cultural competency and diversity
- A need to feel ownership of the process and outcome through participation and input into the changes
- A need for systematic implementation of these changes at every level of the NCA

While NCA and members of its Board of Directors recognized these factors with respect to the national organization, they identified that these factors were applicable, as well, to the Regional Children’s Advocacy Centers (RCACs), Chapters and local Children’s Advocacy Center (CACs) programs. It was the sense of NCA’s Board of Directors that the ability for the organization to embrace the value of cultural competency and diversity required engaging all personnel in the RCACs, state chapters and CACs (staffs and governing/advisory boards) in this process.

The Cultural Competency and Diversity Standard was developed in light of NCA’s shared value that cultural competency and diversity are essential components of sound CAC practice.

**NCA's Standard for Accredited Member on  
Cultural Competency and Diversity**

**DEFINITION:** CULTURALLY COMPETENT SERVICES ARE ROUTINELY MADE AVAILABLE TO ALL CAC CLIENTS AND COORDINATED WITH THE MULTODISCIPLINARY TEAM RESPONSE.

**CRITERIA**

**Essential Components**

- A. The CAC has developed a cultural competency plan that includes community assessment, goals, and strategies.
- B. The CAC must ensure that provisions are made for non-English speaking and deaf or hard of hearing children and their non-offending family members throughout the investigation process.
- C. The CAC and MDT members ensure that all services are provided in a manner that addresses culture and development throughout the investigation, intervention, and case management process.

**Rated Criteria**

- D. The CAC engages in community outreach with underserved populations.
- E. The CAC actively recruits staff, volunteers, and board members that reflect the demographics of the community.
- F. The CAC cultural competency plan has been implemented and evaluated.

## Relevance of Cultural Competency and Diversity

It is an organizational goal of NCA to develop culturally competent responses in our organizational attitudes, practices, policies and structures at all levels: national, regional, state and local. It is necessary for CAC staffs, governing/advisory boards, committees and volunteers to appreciate the relevance of cultural competency and diversity in our work.

The concept of culture is vast and often difficult to understand. Culture can be considered the shared knowledge, values, traditions, languages, beliefs, rules and worldview of a social group. Cultural competency is a set of cultural behaviors, knowledge, skills and attitudes that permit a person or agency to work effectively in more than one culture. This requires the ability to appreciate, understand, interact and work with members of diverse populations within the local community and in cross-cultural situations. NCA accepts diversity as a broad concept that includes race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, educational level, religion, occupation, regional differences, age and disabilities (mental and physical).

Cultural competency begins with empathy for other cultures and respect for their right to be different. It is rooted in the sense that no one culture is superior to another and it thrives on mutual respect.

Imagine you are a four year old African-American child who lives in a black community, goes to a black church and attends an all black head start program. You come to a CAC where you are greeted by a white receptionist and play a game with a white volunteer while your mother talks to a white social worker and a white detective. You are interviewed by a white forensic interviewer. You may not feel that you are in a psychologically safe environment.

Maybe you are a migrant family of Mexican heritage. You neither read nor speak English. You come to the CAC and are greeted by a staff member who does not speak Spanish. This staff member takes you into an office to talk with a worker who took two years of Spanish while in school. You are given forms to fill out that are in English. You may not feel that you are in a psychologically safe environment.

Why is this important?

- Appreciation of diversity and continuing efforts to achieve cultural competency are consistent with the philosophical foundation of CACs.
- Acknowledging and learning about cultural differences strengthens the multidisciplinary response to abuse investigations.
- Appreciation of diversity strengthens the effectiveness of multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) and other teams as they learn to respect the diversity of their community and to respect and value their individual differences.
- Awareness of diversity enriches the options for alternate hypotheses.
- Appreciation of diversity increases the number and kinds of solutions teams can consider.
- Appreciation of diversity and practicing inclusiveness opens channels of communications and favors endorsement of the MDT process by the diverse communities we serve.
- Gaining diverse perspectives presents an opportunity for expression of new ideas and sharing of individual experiences.

## **Capacity to Develop Cultural Competency and Diversity within Your CAC**

CACs have a broad range of responsibilities to the children and families and to the communities they serve. This includes CACs' responsibility to provide professional services in a technically and culturally competent manner.

In order to understand why culture, ethnicity and race are important to others, we must begin with understanding ourselves. Each of us has a cultural history that is ancient as well as ancestral. Professionals understand cultural cues and information based on their individual context of culture and the degree of importance they place on culture in their own lives. Knowing and appreciating culture and the influence it has in our own lives helps us respond to the importance of culture in the lives of the children and families for whom we provide services.

As your CAC seeks ways to increase its value to its service population, embracing diversity demonstrates to your community your interest in inclusive, high quality services that have credibility and, therefore, acceptance, with the children and families you serve. The probability that your CAC will be used by families and agencies, and that the services will be perceived as positive and productive, is improved by your CAC's maintaining constant focus on the diversity of the community it serves and on the community's cultural preferences, needs and requirements.

It is the responsibility of CACs to deliver services based on the diverse needs of children and families within their own communities. In order that CACs meet the needs of all people who may require these services, it is essential that its leadership, governing/advisory board, staff and administration be as informed as possible regarding the cultures, beliefs, values, life experiences, societal norms, language and other practices and preferences of the diverse populations in the communities they serve.

Cultural competency and sensitivity to the diverse needs of the community must be understood, respected and demonstrated in the day-to-day functioning of a CAC at every level. To achieve this, the overall programmatic development of diversity within a CAC must be carefully considered and determined by the governing/advisory board, and implemented by CAC leadership under the guidance of the CAC's executive director.

## **Assessing the Diversity of Those Who Present for Services and of the Larger Community**

Cultural competency and diversity assessment can produce many benefits to the CAC. CAC management gains credibility among staff, volunteers and the community as it becomes apparent how highly diversity is valued and how integral diversity is to day-to-day operations. Clarity is gained regarding the strengths and weakness of the CAC, and this allows for realistic next steps and actions to be identified and planned.

Diversity assessment is an important part of a CAC's cultural competency efforts. Diversity assessment should be looked upon not as an event but as an ongoing process. The results that are obtained from the CAC's assessments can be used as benchmarks against which all future progress can be measured.

Good assessments may take many forms and works best when comprehensive methods are used to identify key factors such as strengths, weaknesses and needs. Each CAC may choose to evaluate cultural competency and diversity differently, but some common practices and concepts used by other CACs, non-profit social justice professions, and by academic and corporate communities may be valuable in helping to develop individualized approaches and tools to assess the diverse populations served by your CAC.

### **Resources for Assistance in Assessment of Cultural Competency and Diversity**

The four RCACs are the best resources to consult when developing cultural competency and diversity assessments for a CAC. RCACs are familiar with past CAC assessments and have often developed tools and instruments specifically for CAC use.

Other resources may be useful when developing assessments for both your CAC and the community. Many universities have conducted successful diversity assessments, as have hospitals and social service agencies. Some have published results on the Internet and are willing to share methodology with the public.

Some consulting firms offer comprehensive assessment services for a fee. Most CACs can accomplish assessments without paying for an outside organization to conduct it. Outside organizations may be useful, an often *pro bono* services can be arranged.

### **Assessing the Diversity of Those Who Do and Those Who Do Not Present for Services**

A foundational question is whether it is important to determine the diversity of populations presenting for care at your CAC or of the community within which your CAC resides. Both are worth knowing, to the extent that they can be identified.

Identifying the populations served and those not served by your CAC may be a complex task. There may be a considerable difference between the distribution of diverse groups in your community and the distribution of the same groups among those who access care at your CAC. Reasons include, but are not limited to:

- Variations in what is viewed as abuse by the group, as determined by factors such as religious beliefs, values, societal norms, life experiences and customs
- Variation in the prevalence of abuse within the diverse groups, as a reflection of differences in factors influencing the prevalence of abuse in all populations, such as poverty and stress
- Tradition within a group that may not permit interacting with others outside their own closed community

There may be a disproportionately limited use of child abuse services by certain segments of your community. For example, in South Central Pennsylvania, where a large population of Amish and Mennonites reside, presentation of a child from these communities for care at a CAC rarely or never occurs, depending on how orthodox the community is. Knowing that this population resides in your service area but does not access child abuse services, and gaining an understanding of the values and practices of this population, provides important information for outreach, education and marketing. Knowing the values and practices of those who do present for care provides valuable information for planning and implementing services.

NCA grants and other funding sources often require providing demographic data on populations served by your CAC. The best source of information about the diverse populations served by your CAC is demographic data that can be retrieved from your CAC case-tracking system. This likely includes breakdowns by age, gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status and the presence of language barriers. However, it may not include other diversity issues such as religion, disability (mental and physical), sexual orientation and military status. While these are important diversity issues, it may be advisable to capture this information individually as it impacts specific cases, rather than adding it to intake forms.

In whatever manner your CAC tracks cases, look for trends and changes in the demography of those using your CAC. For example, you may see an increase in hearing impaired children as a new audiology clinic or school for the deaf opens in your community. A new industry may open in your community drawing immigrant populations to your town. The redistribution of military personnel among bases may create an upsurge in cases involving military investigators.

### **Assessing the Diversity in the Larger Community**

The community served by your CAC should always be taken into consideration when designing services, policies, facilities etc. Community assessments take into account local assets, resources, and activities as well as gaps, barriers or emerging needs. As always, factors more typically thought of (race, ethnicity and gender) should not be the only ones considered when evaluating the make-up and needs of your community. The types of diversity inherent in any community will always be many and varied. These can include, but are not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, geographic location, first language, present language, immigration status, reason for immigrating, generation level, degree of acculturation, socioeconomic status, employment status, religion, disability (mental and physical), physical health and percentage of children who receive free or reduced-price lunches.<sup>1</sup>

Your ability to strengthen diversity within your CAC often hinges on communication with your community. Consultation with the diverse populations within your service area can help you identify which groups are and are not utilizing your CAC, determine where outreach is needed, and gauge public responses to your CAC. Community-based agencies and organizations are important

resources which CACs should draw upon to gain perspective. Regular involvement from diverse community agencies and organizations assists in ensuring broader public awareness of your CAC's services, broader diversity and cultural competency within your CAC and opportunities for:

- Collaboration with these agencies and organizations
- Participation in cultural events which provide a means of increasing community awareness of your CAC and learning more about diverse cultures within your community from a social perspective
- Assistance in identifying valuable resources, such as interpreters and advocates

There are many types of assessment tools to consider when evaluating diversity within a CAC's community. Some of these include: processes and practices review, multiple choice surveys, open-ended surveys, focus groups, interviews and open forum discussions. Which tools to use will depend upon the motivation for your assessment, issues being assessed, past experience, the size of your CAC, demographics, desired outcomes and logistics.<sup>2</sup> Gathering information from numerous sources using a variety of methods will obtain more complete information.

In assessing the diversity of your larger community, you must first define that community or service area. This may have changed over time so be sure your assessment provides and up to date look at your community. Many CACs, originally formed to serve one city, county, municipality or judicial district may, over time, add surrounding service areas or open satellites. To obtain good demographic data on the larger community, define it with great specificity. This will point you to appropriate locations for acquiring more information.

Often, much of the information that you will need can be accessed through readily available websites. For example, extensive demographic data has been compiled from the last census and is available in many formats at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov). Many US county profiles are available at websites such as [www.stats.indiana.edu](http://www.stats.indiana.edu). Population estimate reports by age, race, sex and Hispanic origin for all states are available at <http://censtats.census.gov/data/US>. An important gateway to government statistics collected from over 100 US federal agencies is [www.fedstats.gov](http://www.fedstats.gov). Information that relates specifically to child well-being by state and county is available at [www.aecf.org/kidscount/census](http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/census). A status report of America's key national indicators of child well-being is available at [www.childstats.gov](http://www.childstats.gov).

Similar demographic information is available at many state government websites. These can provide up-to-date demographic characteristics of populations to the level of counties, cities and zip codes. A wide variety of variables, such as age, gender, religion, race, country of birth, and educational and income levels can be found in these websites without difficulty.

There are many places to look for good local demographic data. Begin with your city and county websites. While national census data may be older, cities and counties generally track and update this information more frequently and make fairly accurate predictions about changes in demography. This makes sense, as these changes may drive budgets (through increased or decreased revenue based on changes in socio-economic status, unemployment rates, labor markets, average wage etc) and provision of infrastructure (such as roads, schools, libraries, water, telecommunications, emergency services etc).

School districts often have their finger on the pulse of demographic changes in the community as issues present themselves, such as language barriers, the need to accommodate disability (mental and physical) and other special needs in student populations. Schools are also an important source

of this information. Consult their website, call their community liaison, talk to teachers and principals and read their newsletters for more information.

Community organizations (ethnically, culturally or faith-based, educational etc) may be useful in understanding diversity in your community. Community leaders can often provide more details, not available from other resources, about immigrant populations and other groups in your community. This may be particularly true of religious communities and gay, lesbian and transgender populations.

Cultural centers and alliances may be a particularly rich source of information. Your local business community also has an interest in tracking changing demographic trends in your larger community. Your local chamber of commerce may be able to provide you with thorough trend data. In attempting to attract industries to relocate in your area, they often maintain detailed reports of demographic changes over time. Although it might seem odd at first glance, your convention and visitors bureau also may have this information. In order to “sell” their area to tourists, they must know who is already present in their community.

Demography is more difficult to obtain about groups with special needs, such as the visually or hearing impaired and the mentally or physically disabled. Communicating with the special organizations that provide services to these groups can provide information about the prevalence of these populations within your CAC service area. Furthermore, local universities may have valuable information; many offer education, training and majors in providing services to special needs populations. You may have, in your own community, experts working with children and families with special needs. These professionals can shed light on providing culturally competent services in your CAC.

Community assessments should be treated not only as a way to obtain more information about how best to serve clients, but also as an opportunity to empower community members to use your CAC and become involved in helping children and in publicizing your CAC’s services.

## **Analyzing Your Data**

Near completion of your assessment, it is important for your CAC to ask larger questions of the information gathered:

- Why is your CAC interested in cultural competency and diversity?
- Why does your CAC want recommendations on how to improve?
- How will your CAC process and respond to these recommendations for improvement?
- What was indicated about the overall response of your CAC to its culturally diverse client population?
- What was indicated about the manner in which your CAC manages organizational issues related to diversity?
- What specific strengths were identified?
- What specific weaknesses were identified?
- What subjects and issues surfaced during your assessment that were not addressed in questionnaires, interviews and group discussions?<sup>3</sup>

Now that you have collected data regarding your service population and your wider community, the next step is to analyze your data. Analysis and interpretation of your assessments will help your CAC formulate an action plan and mobilize your findings.

The following questions may be helpful in assessing the significance of the information you collected:

- Does your client population reasonably represent the overall diversity within your wider community and service area?
  - If not, why not?
- In evaluating the demographic data from your case tracking system, can you identify trends or changes in your client population?
  - If so, what accounts for those changes?
- Did your information gathering turn up hidden populations or those with special needs that you have not previously served or been aware of?
- What resources did you identify in your community to learn more about these populations?
- What opportunities did you identify for additional outreach?

Identifying diversity both in the population served by your CAC and in the wider community, comparing the differences and determining reasons for these differences are important in improving your culturally competent response to child abuse within your CAC.

## Identifying Diversity within Your Organization

From an organizational perspective, diversity can include any number of categorizations: gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, urban, rural, values, personalities, marital status, job position, education level, income level, personal talents, life experience etc.<sup>4</sup> As always, thinking about diversity should not be limited to concerns about race and ethnicity, though these matters remain vitally important. A more inclusive outlook when considering diversity among the members of your CAC's governing/advisory board, staff, volunteers and MDT will benefit your CAC not only in administration, but in day-to-day operations.

Cultural competency should reach into all operations and should draw on all available resources and experiences within the organization of your CAC. In fact, many in the social service field find that commitment to diversity must be stated at a basic level in order to fully communicate to staff and clients the significance the principle is given by your organization. Many organizations find it useful to set "inclusivity" and "challenging oppression" as core values that acknowledge the roles oppression and power can play in social justice work.

Cultural competency includes striving to subvert all "isms" (racism, sexism, classism, ageism etc.) and to ensure that everyone understands a basic policy of broad representation that seeks to give everyone a "seat at the table".<sup>5</sup> In addition, your organizational structure should allow for the varying communication, learning and problem-solving techniques inherent in different ethnic groups.

A thorough organizational assessment will have many facets. Your organizational structure, policies, procedures, agreements and informational materials should be reviewed for commitment to and demonstration of diversity. Efforts can be made at each step in the assessment process to value diversity and ensure its importance in CAC operations.

Many CACs have found it useful to build cultural competency and diversity assessments into surveys distributed to their governing/advisory board, staff, volunteers and MDT members to measure your organization's dedication to cultural competency (both perceived and actual). For example, First Witness Child Abuse Resource CAC in Duluth, Minnesota asks respondents to rate and comment on their CAC's overall adherence to certain tenets:

- Acknowledgement and protection of children's rights to their own culture and to the customs, beliefs and practices of that culture
- Affirmation that an individual's culture is an integral part of a child's overall (physical, emotional and intellectual) development and well-being
- Responsiveness to issues of cultural competency and diversity
- Ability to design programs and services that reflect the population served
- Consideration of cultural factors such as language, race, ethnicity, customs, family structure and community dynamics in development of management and service delivery strategies
- Respect for the diversity and rights of those being served and those providing services

First Witness also requests that respondents consider how their CAC's written materials, publications and governing policies reflect a deep-rooted commitment to cultural competency.<sup>6</sup>

Many CACs distribute surveys to clients families, some time after rendering services, to measure the extent to which the CAC is providing culturally competent services. Parents and guardians may

be asked to rate the CAC on a number of topics and to comment on their perception of attention given by the CAC's personnel to cultural issues. By following this format, the CAC can witness the effect policies and procedures have on the children and families who are served by the program.

Assessment of your organization will benefit by discerning who your community power brokers are and which organizations have wide support. Often, these power brokers and organizations will be eager to provide input as to choices that can be made to enhance community empowerment and stakeholding in your CAC.

Surveys of community organizations can be used to assess how your CAC is perceived and what the community response has been to your CAC. They can also be used to solicit suggestions for improvement in services and in their method of delivery.

A more in-depth approach for CAC outreach for assessment is the use of round-table discussions or focus groups with community leaders. This allows for greater community investment and strikes closer to the heart of the empowerment issue. This form of assessment can be used as an opportunity to get community organizations "on board" with your CAC and to aid in promotion of your CAC's services.

### **Governing/Advisory Board**

An effective tool in identifying diversity is a matrix. This will allow you to better know your governing/advisory board's current diversity and can help you determine what diversity needs you must strive to fulfill.

When considering governing/advisory board composition, your CAC should seek out board members who reflect your community and who have strong ties to different groups and organizations. Selecting membership of governing/advisory boards presents an opportunity to gain representation from people of disparate education and income levels, as well as community members from varied professional and ethnic backgrounds. Governing/advisory board membership is an appropriate channel through which the member's life experiences and personal talents can be drawn upon to inform CAC initiatives and operations. Remember advanced education and extensive professional experience may not be important for every member of the governing/advisory board to possess. However, member's personal and professional experiences, such as a military background or working on a military installation, can be leveraged to provide insight for programmatic planning, as well as to develop a deeper connection between your CAC and your community.

Consultation with ethnically-based, culturally-based, faith-based, educational and other institutions may be useful in understanding what kinds of representation on your governing/advisory board will most benefit your community.

### **Staff**

Your CAC should strive to reflect cultural competency in hiring practices and in ongoing staff development. It is the responsibility of your executive director to ensure that this occurs.

Assessment of diversity among your staff should start with identification of current staff demography. A matrix is helpful for this purpose. Assessment should progress to a review of hiring practices and policies (General Principles and Suggestions for Hiring Staff, Governing/Advisory Board Members and Volunteers, p. 19). The next step involves taking stock of staff orientation and ongoing training and development (Orientation of Staff, Governing/Advisory Board and Volunteers, and Ongoing Training within Your CAC, p.20).

Diversity in staff composition is dependent on a number of factors and is obviously influenced by the number of staff at your CAC. Types of diversity that may be of particular importance may include staff members who:

- Come from different cultural backgrounds
- Come from various urban or rural settings
- Speak two or more languages
- Have different educational backgrounds
- Have different areas of expertise.

## **Volunteers**

Assessment of your volunteer corps can be carried out in much the same way you evaluate your staff composition.

A review of volunteer recruiting practices will resemble the process used for reviewing staff recruitment but can also involve more direct outreach to community groups, schools, community centers, faith-based organizations etc. By consulting your community not only for candidates for volunteering at your CAC but also for input regarding your recruitment process itself (how best to advertise, what CAC functions to emphasize, what services most inspire people etc), a CAC can empower community members once again to feel connected with your CAC and to view it as a strong and constructive component of your local community.

## **MDT (Multidisciplinary Team)**

MDT composition is often an area where your CAC wields less influence, since many MDT members are hired and assigned to your MDT by partner agencies. This does not mean, however, that a CAC can ignore diversity and cultural competency with respect to your MDT.

NCA Standards for Accredited Members state that MDT case review should be “utilized as an opportunity for team members to increase understanding of the complexity of child abuse cases.” CACs can consider this criterion with an eye toward cultural competency. Case reviews present an opportunity for discussing a client’s culture, resource sharing (when appropriate) and the impact of cultural issues on each case. MDT members can be surveyed formally or informally as to the level they feel such cultural discussions take place and for suggestions for improving communication and cultural sensitivity.

## **DETERMINING DIVERSITY NEEDS**

Now that you have identified those who serve and are being served by your CAC and those populations in your community that are underserved, you must determine what special needs they have and how best to meet those needs.

### **Networking With Diverse Populations within your Community**

It is the responsibility of programs and staff to deliver services based on the diverse needs of children and families within their communities in order to ensure quality care. In order for your CAC to meet the needs of all who access its services, your governing/advisory board, staff and administration must be as informed as possible regarding the diverse populations of the communities they serve (see above, *Assessing the Diversity of Those Who Do and Those Who Do Not Present for Care*, and *Assessing the Diversity in the Larger Community*). It is important to obtain as broad a representation as possible when gathering information relevant to program development and service delivery. This means networking or reaching out to those diverse populations within a service area to identify diverse populations and to engage them in an exchange of information regarding culture, beliefs, values, life experiences, societal norms, language and other issues relevant to accessing CAC services.

While there are differences among cultures, there are also differences within cultures that may impact service delivery. We cannot assume that one person from a particular population can speak for all within that group. It is critical to refrain from making assumptions about whose voice is being heard -- to be sure to identify what diversity is truly represented. For example, a leader in a particular Native American tribe cannot speak for other tribes, a Korean cannot speak for other Asian cultures, and an African-American may not feel or be qualified to speak for black populations whose origins were in the Caribbean Islands. In addition, a representative from your local Air Force base should not be expected to speak for other branches of the military (Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, etc.)

One method of reaching out to diverse populations within your community is to meet with identified leaders of those communities. In this manner, one can both offer CAC services and learn as much as possible about that population's particular beliefs, cultural needs, language barriers etc that may impact service delivery.

It may be impossible, however, to learn everything we need to know about a particular group or culture by networking with identified leaders and community agencies regarding the diverse groups within your CAC service delivery area. It is still essential, when confronted with the realization that particular populations may have needs beyond the knowledge, awareness or capacity of your CAC, that you be willing to ask community leaders and agencies what is needed and how your CAC staff can respond appropriately and respectfully to the needs of children and families from cultures different from your own.

## Identifying Needs and Service Gaps in Underserved Populations

For underserved populations already presenting for care, your existing CAC clients are your best source of information regarding needs and gaps in service delivery. Information can be collected from existing service populations in a number of ways:

- **Client Satisfaction Surveys:** Many CACs routinely ask non-offending family members and, with permission of the family members, age appropriate child victims, to fill out surveys, if they so desire, regarding the services rendered by their CAC. These surveys can also be used to request feedback about what additional services are needed or would be helpful. For populations with language barriers you will need to have your form translated into other languages (and the responses translated back to English). Using these surveys, you may also obtain important feedback about the comfort level your facility provides. For example, in one client satisfaction survey an adolescent replied that the interview room felt too small and left her uncomfortably close to the forensic interviewer. Different cultures and individuals have differing expectations of the physical proximity of two people in conversation. This feedback was immensely valuable to the CAC in considering the physical layout of the available space.
- **Focus Groups:** If your CAC provides non-offending parent support groups or adolescent groups, you might consider adding an optional session, or requesting permission to use a portion of a scheduled session, to obtain feedback about your services and areas that need improvement.

Issues to explore might include, but are not limited to:

- What, if anything, made you feel especially welcome and comfortable at the CAC?
- What, if anything, made you feel unwelcome or uncomfortable at the CAC?
- Did you have any difficulty understanding any materials provided to you?
- What materials would have been more helpful than those provided?
- What additional services would have been helpful to you or to other families in similar situations?
- How would you describe the services you and your family received at the CAC?

Be sure to keep the focus group manageably small, ask open-ended questions whenever possible, probe short responses for more information and be open to any answer given. Some cultural groups place great emphasis on respectful listening, silence and thoughtful responses. Don't rush through your questions, and never interrupt.

Minority and underserved populations often have informal community leaders (tribal elders, religious leaders, community activists etc) who wield tremendous influence. Informal community leaders may be able to help you find participants for a focus group to explore these issues. If you use an informal community leader to identify participants, ensure that the invitation to participate comes from the community leader and that the community leader is invited to participate. This leader may help facilitate or may co-facilitate the meeting.

While surveys and focus groups may be helpful in identifying unmet needs in those populations already accessing services at your CAC, you will need other tools for those populations that are in your wider community but have not yet accessed your services. These may include:

- **Group Presentations:** Often CACs are requested to present information regarding their services to churches, civic groups and service organizations. Look for opportunities that have a cultural tie-in. For example, have you presented at the Latino Chamber of Commerce? Have you spoken at a historically African-American church or college? Have you asked to meet with tribal representation? Have you presented at a teacher in-service at the school for the deaf?

While presenting information about your CAC, open a dialogue about your desire to offer services and ask for assistance in structuring culturally competent services to these communities. Offer your services as a resource. As trust develops, you may find your CAC being called upon more and more.

- Individual Interviews: As you identify informal community leaders, ask to speak with them individually about the services of your CAC and how you can improve and expand those services in culturally competent ways. Ask for a referral to others within the community who may have unique perspectives or additional thoughts. Keep in mind that your own values and assumptions about diverse groups may be challenged in these conversations. Also be mindful that there is often a historical context for the relationships between governmental organizations (police, prosecutors, child protective services) and minority populations. Ask and educate yourself about this, as these relationships will undoubtedly influence utilization of your CAC by underserved populations.

# CREATING A CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND DIVERSITY PLAN

In order to meet NCA's Cultural Competency and Diversity standard, CACs and MDTs must demonstrate that a concerted effort is made to interact with clients, coworkers, and peers in a manner that recognizes and incorporates that person's cultural values and heritage into the relationship. This concept is as basic to CAC philosophy as is providing developmentally appropriate, child-friendly services. In doing so, children and families of all backgrounds feel welcomed, valued, respected and acknowledged by staff, team members and volunteers.

A cultural competency and diversity plan of this sort may seem complex, but it is essential. With time, priorities shift, leadership changes and resources may be, or may become, scarce. Your cultural competency and diversity plan will serve as a useful tool for developing a strategic plan to bring your CAC and team through transitions, ensure continuity of your cultural competency and diversity initiatives and assist management in securing funding to support your pursuit of cultural competency.

By creating such a plan, your CAC and MDT partners will have a clear roadmap that will guide their activities in this area. Your plan will lay the groundwork in many areas including public outreach, community education, staff and team training, resource identification and competent service provision.

Your cultural competency plan should not be created in a vacuum. Ideally, a task force comprised of CAC management, governing/advisory board members and staff, and MDT members should be assembled to work on the project. Consider bringing additional persons into this process, such as:

- Local experts on culture and diversity in your local school system, professional development offices at local colleges or universities and trainers used by your partner agencies
- Community leaders from minority cultures (who may serve as participants or recommend others to take part)
- Non-offending parents or caregivers of children formerly served by your CAC, who could lend a unique perspective to the process

When beginning this process, the first issue to be undertaken by the task force is an assessment of the diversity within your community, organization and clientele served (Assessing the Diversity of Those Who Do and Those Who Do Not Present for Care, and Assessing the Diversity in the Larger Community). This information should then be used to determine your cultural competency and diversity needs.

- **Begin your cultural competency and diversity plan by stating the needs of your community, organization and clientele to be addressed in your cultural competency and diversity plan.**

After completing your assessment, engage in discussions that bring your task force to a consensus on your CAC's and MDT's values regarding culture and diversity. Various organizational documents, such as your CAC's administrative policies and procedures and your CAC and MDT protocols and agreement, may provide statements or directives to help begin the conversation. If this is not a topic that has been openly discussed by your CAC or MDT in the past, it may be useful

to have a facilitator lead these discussions. Through this process, identify the CAC's and MDT's cultural competency and diversity values. This could include beliefs about client/caretaker interactions, or clients' beliefs, norms and peer relationships.

- **The next section of your cultural competency and diversity plan should highlight your CAC's and MDT's values regarding culture and diversity.**

Cultural competency is a growth process which, realistically, no one ever completes. The same is true for organizations and teams. By identifying your diversity needs and examining your cultural competency and diversity values, task force participants should begin to see gaps in your CAC's and MDT's cultural competency. One can begin to address these gaps through personal development and growth exercises as well as training sessions devoted to cultural competency and diversity topics.

The task force should develop expectations of your CAC staff and MDT members to embrace these cultural competency and diversity initiatives and participate in training and symposia related to these topics (see below, Orientation of Staff, Governing/Advisory Board and Volunteers, and Ongoing Training within Your CAC). By establishing such expectations and training goals, CAC and partner agency managers can clearly lay out professional development guidelines that further this initiative. Cultural competency and diversity-related sessions may be difficult to find. NCA's Standards for Accredited Members should not be read to imply that your CAC must underwrite such activities; they should be interpreted to mean that your CAC should take the lead in identifying such trainings and opportunities, ensure that staff and team members comply with the expectations articulated by your task force, and develop related opportunities if none are found to exist. These may include a wide variety of offerings including seminars, conferences, discussion groups, literature reviews and multi-media packages.

- **The next section of your cultural competency and diversity plan should lay out your CAC's and MDT's training goals, and expectations placed upon staff and team members to access such training and development opportunities.**

As the next step, your task force should articulate ways in which culture and diversity will be incorporated into the work of your CAC and MDT. Participants should ensure that this articulation covers the totality of cultural competency and diversity. Obviously every conceivable means cannot be identified and articulated in such a plan, but provisions for recognition, action and flexibility should be included. This articulation might include items such as recognizing how the child and family's culture and heritage may influence trust in public officials, and providing forensic interviews that are tailored to meet children's developmental needs and which are cognizant and respectful of familial customs. Other examples might be provisions for assessing family units for language needs, developmental delays and religious practices at various points throughout your MDT's interactions with the family, and determining appropriate mental health needs that respect cultural heritage and are financially feasible.

- **The next section of your cultural competency and diversity plan should describe how culture and diversity will be incorporated into the CAC and MDT response.**

A cultural competency and diversity plan is well intentioned but useless if appropriate resources are not available to implement it. As your task force identifies facility needs, training goals and expectations, and various facets of the process of incorporation of culture and diversity into your CAC and MDT response, it should identify areas or needs that will require additional resources. These resources could include, for example, funding, human resources (such as Spanish speaking providers) and programmatic resources (such as faith-based counselors). If such resources are available, your task force should form appropriate relationships to secure these resources and include new players into your team response. If these resources are not readily available, your task force should undertake a process to develop the resources or identify alternatives.

- **Next, your Cultural Competency and Diversity Plan should identify related costs and resources necessary to ensure success of your cultural competency and diversity plan.**

Your cultural competency and diversity plan should include an evaluation to ensure that efforts lead to your desired outcome. Task force members should develop measurable outcomes that are directly related to the tasks to be undertaken. For instance, if your community sees an increase in the deaf population, your task force may determine that your CAC and MDT should improve its ability to provide services in American Sign Language (ASL). Outcome measures for such a goal might include, for example, obtaining statistics detailing the number of deaf clients and family members served, the number of services provided using team members who can sign, and the number of services provided using ASL translators.

- **Your Cultural Competency and Diversity Plan should include measurable outcomes to assess the impact of your cultural competency and diversity plan.**

Outcome measures should be identified, and your task force should articulate an evaluation process that includes assigning responsibility for carrying out an ongoing evaluation of achievement of these outcomes. The results of this ongoing outcome evaluation should be presented to your task force periodically, and your task force should review these activities and make adjustments to govern future activities in the process as your plan evolves.

- **Your Cultural Competency and Diversity Plan should include a timeline of activities.**

CAC and MDT professionals are constantly stretched thin by competing deadlines and commitments. In such a situation, new projects tend to fall through the cracks and have lower priority. To ensure that implementation of your cultural competency and diversity plan stays on track, your task force should develop a timeline that guides development of all phases of your plan.

- **Your Cultural Competency and Diversity Plan should conclude with an articulation of an outcome evaluation process.**

## **DEVELOPING POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES TO SUPPORT AND ACHIEVE YOUR CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND DIVERSITY PLAN**

Policies, procedures and practices that address cultural competency and diversity should be developed, just as policies, procedures and practices are developed to address other areas of service. This will assure that a continuous effort is maintained toward being culturally competent and diverse and will assure staff's awareness of the need to do so. It will also assure a continuous process even through staff transitions. Policies and procedures should, at minimal, address hiring, retention and training.

All accredited CACs must have a non-discrimination policy in their CAC's policies and procedures. Non-discrimination information should be posted so that it can be seen. Make sure that staff, governing/advisory board members and volunteers are aware of the existence of your policy and how to access it, that they know what it says and that they adhere to it. Training on this is often required for grant purposes, but it should be done as a routine on an annual basis.

### **General Principles and Suggestions for Hiring Staff, Governing/Advisory Board Members and Volunteers**

Set cultural competency and diversity-driven goals to apply when vacancies occur within your CAC staff, governing/advisory board and volunteer pool. Do not listen to the argument that there are no good minority candidates to fill vacancies, even if the argument is coming from minority members. Hiring policies should address ways to make sure a diverse staff is hired and maintained. Your hiring procedure should assure that job vacancy announcements address your non-discrimination policy.

Consideration should be given to advertisement and outreach to attract staff of diverse backgrounds. Evaluation of methods of dissemination of information about staff openings is vital to the process. Some CACs have consulted with community groups prior to publishing job announcements to gain input as to your best avenues for advertising. CACs can ask a number of questions:

- How can we demonstrate a pledge to support cultural competency and diversity in our staff through the way we distribute job postings and where they are disseminated?
- How do we advertise job openings in publications that reach a representative cross-section of our community?
- Are there certain information networks we can access that specifically reach minority populations?
- Do certain segments of our community typically not receive community news by traditional means?
  - If so, what innovative methods can be used to disseminate information about staff openings to these segments of our community?
- Does our job advertisement specifically state that candidates must have an understanding of diverse cultures and possess cultural sensitivity?

Consider non-traditional methods of identifying candidates for recruitment by:

- Contacting organizations in your area that serve diverse populations
- Posting job vacancy announcements in ethnic or minority owned newspapers
- Contacting various minority chambers of commerce
- Contacting local colleges and universities
- Using media that attract minority listeners and viewers, including radio and television stations that specifically target such populations
- Contacting community leaders of various ethnicities for assistance and suggestions in locating qualified applicants
- Contacting other CACs and agencies dealing with child abuse or other victim services to see if they have suggestions for recruitment or if they have applicants they might be able to refer
- In small and rural areas, reaching out to neighboring communities or contacting the above resources in the nearest large community

To assist in recruitment, consider:

- Asking staff governing/advisory board members and current volunteers for recommendations of people they know in your community
- Contacting minority community leaders for recommendations
- Asking MDT members for recommendations
- Seeking out young professionals in your community
- Contacting leadership groups in your area for recommendations
- Contacting other resources mentioned in the above section on hiring

If you have a need for a bilingual interviewer or therapist that cannot be met with onsite staff, consider contracting offsite for this service. Be sure contract services:

- Know the NCA standards pertaining to specialties
- Receive training on cultural competency and diversity, child abuse and the role of your MDT in investigating cases of child abuse

Use of volunteers within a CAC depends on the needs and capacities of the individual CAC and on the services provided by that CAC. Volunteer services can, however, provide a broader avenue for pursuit of a true reflection of your community. Since many volunteer jobs may not require advanced education or extensive past experience, recruitment of volunteers can be a freer process and can be used as an opportunity to reach out to your entire community.

### **Ideas for Retention of Members of Your Staff, Governing/Advisory Board Members and Volunteers:**

Retention of diverse and culturally competent staff, governing/advisory board members and volunteers is critical. Retention can be improved by:

- Providing quality training on diversity and cultural sensitivity issues for your staff, governing/advisory board and volunteers
- Listening to suggestions concerning the needs of your clients and families from your staff, governing/advisory board and volunteers
- Respecting minority and ethnic staff, governing/advisory board members and volunteers for the knowledge and diversity they bring to your program
- Involving staff, governing/advisory board members and volunteers in projects

- Appoint staff and governing/advisory board members to positions of leadership, as appropriate
- Promoting from within so that your staff and governing/advisory board members have an opportunity to grow and advance

### **Orientation of Staff, Governing/Advisory Board and Volunteers**

Cultural competency and diversity training should be part of your orientation for new staff, governing/advisory board and volunteers. This should include information regarding your CAC's diversity and non-discrimination policies, cultural information about the ethnic groups served by your CAC, and your CAC's plans for community outreach to diverse populations.

### **Ongoing Training within Your CAC**

Within the CAC culture and its diverse professional disciplines, the template for ongoing training and continuing education has long existed. CAC professionals have committed themselves to keeping abreast of the dynamic knowledge base that enables best practice in pediatric medicine, legal practice, law enforcement, child protective services, social work, mental health, victim advocacy and forensic interviewing. A parallel process is needed in the area of diversity and cultural competency.

Ongoing training and continuing education will enable you to facilitate more culturally competent services, thereby improving outcomes for children and families in your CAC's community. Furthermore, because NCA Standards for Accredited Members require that CACs promote policies, practices and procedures that are culturally competent, it is critical that CACs commit to increasing the cultural competency of their staff, governing/advisory boards, MDTs and volunteers. Attention should also be paid to include in these trainings professionals (medical and mental health providers, counseling services, interpreters, partner agencies etc) who provide contract services within your CAC or to whom you refer clients for services outside your CAC.

Records should be kept that track which staff members attend which trainings, how often they utilize these resources and any feedback they provide. Such records that are updated regularly are one way of providing ongoing assessment, as opposed to a one-time survey or group discussion.

Training on cultural competency and diversity should be a part of your CAC's policies, procedures and practices. Your staff and governing/advisory board can be surveyed to see whether existing training offerings are adequate, useful and accessible, and to determine what additional trainings should be implemented. A cultural competency and diversity training program and plan should be developed, reviewed and updated annually to assure it meets your agency and community needs. This plan should include information regarding your CAC's diversity and non-discrimination policies, cultural information about the ethnic groups served by your CAC, and your CAC's plans for community outreach with diverse populations.

Ongoing training should take place on a regular basis (monthly, quarterly, semiannually or annually). Formats for successive trainings should differ in order to help keep each interesting and informative. As expertise is developed by CAC staff members, they should become part of your training staff.

Whose responsibility is it to ensure that staff members receive ongoing training in cultural competency and diversity? Establishment of a clearly responsible agent will help prevent information and new initiatives from “falling through the cracks”.

Trainings should include, but not be limited to:

- Increasing knowledge and awareness about the cultural issues, needs, views, fears and feelings of the diverse groups that comprise your community
- Increasing knowledge and awareness about the cultural issues, needs, views, fears and feelings of the diverse groups that are served by your CAC
- Raising awareness of staff, MDT members, governing/advisory board members and volunteers about historic and current issues relevant to diverse populations in the community and served by your CAC
- Refraining from discriminating against clients and colleagues because of their race, age, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, educational level, occupation, disability (mental and physical), marital status or other personal characteristics
- Dispelling myths about diverse populations
- Opening channels of communication with diverse populations

Training for your MDT members is key. Much like training for your staff, MDT training will aid in establishing cultural sensitivity while allowing for a quantifiable measure of competency. Because, almost by definition, MDT members come from very different backgrounds and experiences, a needs assessment regarding what training will be most beneficial is a solid first step. Delineating what past workshops, conferences and classes MDT members have attended will allow MDT members to learn from the experiences of others and will define what remaining areas must be addressed.

If interpreters (including those for the hearing impaired) are used, they too need training on cultural competency and diversity, the dynamics of child abuse and child sexual abuse, and the roles of all personnel within your CAC, including the roles of MDT members. This will help insure accurate interpretation and appropriate responses by the interpreter. This training is separate from and in addition to what is required by states for interpreter certification or licensure.

Staff, MDT members and governing/advisory board members should also be strongly encouraged to attend cultural competency and diversity workshops or cultural competency workshops at the major conferences they attend during the year.

### **Your CAC’s Facility**

Your CAC should be child friendly and should be decorated in a manner that is reflective of the cultures and populations that your CAC serves and that are part of your community. Also, books, toys, videos, CDs, DVDs etc should reflect the various cultural groups served at your CAC and within your community.

Likewise, all outside agencies and offices in which services are provided on a referral basis for your clients should be culturally reflective and sensitive to all cultures, groups, ages and genders served by your CAC.

## **Professional (Medical, Forensic Interview, Therapy) and Volunteer Services**

Those who provide services within CACs should reflect the multi-cultural community and be culturally competent in order to enhance interaction between the CAC staff and the client and family, and to enhance communication among CAC staff, governing/advisory board, volunteers and MDT members.

All medical providers, forensic interviewers and therapists, whether services take place onsite or offsite, including contract services, must:

- Be familiar with NCA's Standards for Accredited Members
- Be comfortable working with all groups of people
- Be familiar with different communication styles of the cultures served by your CAC
- Be included in your CAC's cultural competency and diversity training at an initial and ongoing basis
- Attend training on cultural competency and diversity, including professionals who are bilingual or multilingual
- Be familiar with and use as appropriate interviewing tools (such as dolls, drawings) that are representative and reflective of the various cultures, ethnic groups and populations served by your CAC

# **IMPLEMENTING AND EVALUATING YOUR CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND DIVERSITY PLAN**

When designing an implementation and evaluation plan on cultural competency and diversity, CAC leadership must take into consideration that not all staff may find this as an area of interest or even understand its importance. Organizational leadership must make it a goal to lead by example and to motivate staff on all levels so that your plan will be incorporated into the daily practices in all components of your CAC. There are several levels of staff that have to be engaged in this process in order to ensure that cultural competency and diversity is a significant part of each component of your CAC.

## **Implementing Your Cultural Competency and Diversity Plan**

Recommendations for engaging members of your governing/advisory board:

- Set the direction for your entire organization by making cultural competency and diversity a priority and creating organizational expectations.
- Empower your executive director and other key staff to implement necessary changes.
- Relay the message and significance to your partner agencies and key community leaders.

Recommendations for engaging your staff and volunteers:

- Create an opportunity (open discussions, surveys etc) for staff and volunteer assessment on the topics of cultural competency and diversity.
- Create an opportunity to convey to staff and volunteers that your governing/advisory board has set cultural competency and diversity as a priorities and each staff member and volunteer should treat them as priorities.
- Provide opportunities for training and education. Include a plan for those who attend training to bring the information back to the rest of your staff.
- Develop a specific plan on how to implement your cultural competency and diversity plan in the daily operations of your CAC.

Recommendation for engaging your MDT:

- The governing/advisory board should enlist the support of the leaders of the various disciplines represented within your MDT.
- Create an opportunity for MDT assessment on the topics of cultural competency and diversity.
- Provide opportunities for training and education.
- Determine partner agencies' priorities related to cultural competency and diversity (and what cultural competency and diversity policies they currently have).
- Create opportunities for open discussion on how to implement cultural competency and diversity standards into your case management process.

Recommendations for engaging your umbrella agency and its parent agency and administration:

- Your governing/advisory board, along with your CAC's executive director, should convey to your umbrella agency and its parent agency and administration the importance and significance of your cultural competency and diversity plan.
- Your governing/advisory board, along with your CAC's executive director, should present to your umbrella agency and its parent agency and administration how your CAC's priority area of

cultural competency and diversity fits into your umbrella agency's and parent agency's and administration goals.

### **Evaluating your Cultural Competency and Diversity Plan**

It is important to assess your clients' and your community's perception of your CAC's work and to determine what suggestions can be offered for improvement. Methods of assessment may include questionnaires, interviews, surveys, observation of customers or employees, focus groups among clients and employees, round-table discussions and focus groups.

Consider the following key questions when designing a program evaluation.

- For what purposes is your evaluation being done?
- What do you want to be able to decide as a result of your evaluation?
- Who are your audiences for the information obtained from your evaluation (customers, bankers, funders, governing/advisory board, management, staff, customers, clients etc)?
- What kinds of information are needed to make decisions or to enlighten your intended audiences? This information may include, but not be limited to, your program's:
  - Processes and products (inputs, activities and outputs)
  - Customers or clients
  - Benefits (outcomes) to customers or clients
  - Strengths and weaknesses
  - Failures and reasons for these failures
- From what sources should information be collected (employees, customers, clients, groups of customers or clients and employees, program documentation, community groups and leaders etc)?
- How can needed information be collected in a reasonable fashion (questionnaires, interviews, surveys, observation of customers or employees, focus groups among customers or employees etc)?
- When is your information needed (by when must it be collected)?
- What resources are available to help collect your information?

## ENDNOTES

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4. Peter R. Correia III, “Diversity: Making It Work for You,” Reflections, National Resource CAC for Youth Development, University of Oklahoma, 1995.
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