

## AzMAT Mentors Program Provider Collaboration Tool #2 *Improving Cultural Competency to Better Serve Diverse Populations*



The AzMAT Mentors Program aims to increase capacity for offering substance use disorder/opioid use disorder (SUD/ODU) prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery. This is a tool for experienced medication assisted treatment (MAT) providers to use when collaborating with less experienced MAT providers. Please consider using this during collaborative consultations if your collaborator indicated a **high priority in patient-centered strategies**.

### **Cultural Humility vs. Cultural Competence**

The term cultural competence is not all encompassing to the discussion about culture. It was used throughout the flyer to match the literature referenced. AzMAT Mentors values the practice of **cultural humility** as it is a **lifelong process of reflection and critique** which allows us infinite opportunities to learn about diverse cultures, and identities.

### **Why is Cultural Competency in Healthcare Important?**

Cultural competence in healthcare recognizes that healthcare decisions are shaped by an individual's age, race, ethnicity, sex, gender, socioeconomic status, patient literacy skills and language<sup>1</sup>. There are differences in racial, ethnic and gender prevalence rates which influences access to care<sup>2</sup>. Striving to cultivate inclusive environments that encourages patients from diverse backgrounds to seek and remain in health care is an important aspect of patient-centered care.

### **What are Components of Cultural Competency?**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) highlights key aspects of cultural competence in its Treatment Improvement Protocol<sup>3</sup>. Here is a synthesis of a few that you can discuss during your collaborator consultations:

#### **Physical Environment:**

- When was the last time you checked your clinic's environment through a culturally competent lens?  
Consider the following:
  - **Forms and signage.** Are they accessible in languages spoken by the populations served? When was the last time they were reviewed?
  - **Descriptive images.** Are they used to complement written instructions? Do they include alternative text for people with visual impairments?
  - **Spaces.** Are they warm, inviting and culturally relevant? If you have decorations, do they reflect the populations the organization serves?
  - **Accessibility.** Are the buildings, rooms/restrooms, and technology accessible to everyone?

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## Communication and Engagement:

- Handshakes, facial expressions, greetings and friendly short conversation may be the first step to building patient-provider rapport. Yet, there may be cultural differences in communication. Be sure never to assume specific communication patterns based on a patient's cultural context. Consider:
  - **Engaging translators.** Make time so patients feel engaged with the translator.
  - **Pacing yourself.** Slow down or speed up while speaking to match the patient's pace.
  - **Keeping it simple.** Use accessible language (plain and break down concepts).
  - **Using pictures.** Some folks prefer images over words. Use images to help communicate key points.
  - **Remembering it may be the first time.** Do not overwhelm patients with too much information.
  - **Checking yourself.** Use the teach-back method where you kindly ask patients to explain back what you were explaining.
  - **Making safety first.** Create environments where the patient feels safe to ask questions or offer additional information.

Providers are encouraged to check out the full SAMHSA TIP-59 and specifically:

[Appendix C 'Tools for Assessing Cultural Competence'](#).

Feel free to visit the AzMAT Mentors Program webpage which includes other resources:

<https://crh.arizona.edu/mentor>

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- 1 Georgetown University, Health Policy Institute. Cultural Competence in Health Care: Is it important for people with chronic conditions? Available at: <https://hpi.georgetown.edu/cultural/>. Accessed January 20, 2021
  - 2 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General, Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health. Washington, DC: HHS, November 2016.
  - 3 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Improving Cultural Competence. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series No. 59. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4849. 2014. Available at: <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/TIP-59-Improving-Cultural-Competence/SMA15-4849>. Accessed January 6, 2022.



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