

Purpose

The purpose of the Cultural Competency and Diversity Plan is to enhance the cultural competence of staff in support of our mission, values, and practice principles. This plan will be reviewed annually by the management team and revised as appropriate.

MonmouthCares Mission

To facilitate positive change so that children with emotional and behavioral challenges, along with their families, have the greatest opportunities to live, thrive, and develop in their communities. Our youth may also have intellectual/developmental, substance use, and/or physical health challenges.

MonmouthCares Values

- We are child and family centered, with strengths, needs and preferences of the child and family guiding the services chosen or developed in conjunction with the family.
- MonmouthCares' services are community based, individually tailored to children and their families, flexible and outcome based, with the locus of services, as well as management and decision-making responsibility, resting at the community level.
- Monmouth strives to be culturally competent, with services that are responsive to the culture, race, and ethnicity of the families we serve and the communities in which we live.
- MonmouthCares strive for excellence and to exceed the minimum standards of practice on behalf of our children and families. MonmouthCares views every obstacle as a challenge from which we build our strength.

MonmouthCares Practice Principles

- MonmouthCares provides care management for youth and families following the Wraparound model and principles:
 - Family voice and choice
 - Team based
 - Natural supports
 - Collaboration
 - Community-based
 - Culturally competent
 - Individualized
 - Strength-based
 - Unconditional
 - Outcome based
- We incorporate youth and family's strengths, needs, abilities, and preferences in Wraparound service planning, using family friendly language.
- The primary service delivery shall be through formal and informal resources in neighborhood-based organizations and/or provider networks or collaboratives.
- The child/family and significant persons in their lives will be partners on the Child & Family Team that plans services and makes decisions.
- Individual Service Planning and subsequent linkage with services will be immediate, responsive, and specific.
- All service system partners participate with the understanding that there is a no eject, no reject policy towards children and families referred for services and a common mission among affiliates.

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- We train our staff to recognize and manage anger, fear, and/or distress in youth and families. We do not use seclusion and restraint as interventions.

What Is Cultural Competence?

A commonly adopted definition of cultural competence is by child welfare advocate and social worker, Terry L. Cross, who defined cultural competency as “a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations” (Cross, Bazron, Dennis & Isaacs, 1989¹).

According to SAMHSA, cultural competence is the ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. In practice, both individuals and organizations can be culturally competent.

“Culture,” according to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health (OMH), is defined as “integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious or social groups.”

At MonmouthCares, cultural competence means having the capacity to function effectively as an individual or an organization within the context of the beliefs, values, behaviors, customs, and needs of the families and communities we serve.

Developmental Planning

Since becoming culturally competent is a developmental process, planning for such development is what drives learning and growth in MonmouthCares. We rely on planning and feedback-based re-planning to continuously build cultural knowledge, appreciation, and capacity to tailor our services and practices to meet the needs and expectations of the diverse communities we serve.

To facilitate this developmental process, a cross-level Cultural Competence and Diversity Committee was established in February 2019. The mission of the committee is to design programs and organization-wide activities in order to enhance the cultural competence of our staff.

Culturally Competent Workforce

Individual competence in cultural diversity can be examined in terms of a continuum that moves through six stages:

- **Cultural destructiveness** – I make a conscious effort to destroy cultures that are different from my own or from what I think will work best for others.“We are all that is important.”
- **Cultural Incapacity** - I am unwilling to be useful or helpful to other cultures.“We take care of our own.”
- **Cultural denial/indifference** - I believe that culture/color and dimensions of diversity are unimportant. “All people are the same.”
- **Cultural pre-competence** - I realize that my responses to cultural difference are more often than not culturally destructive and I am trying to understand how to respond culturally competently/proficiently. “Often have nice written policies, but limited action.” The operative word is “trying.”

¹ Toward a Culturally Competent System of Care - A Monograph on Effective Services for Minority Children Who Are Severely Emotionally Disturbed, Prepared by Terry L. Cross, et al. with the assistance of the Portland Research and Training Center for Improved Services to Severely Emotionally Handicapped Children and Their Families, March 1989

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- **Cultural competence** - A commitment to social and economic justice. “Foster mutual adaptation to difference to create environments that are useful for all.”
- **Cultural proficiency** - I hold culture in high esteem and that it is my organizing frames of reference and the foundation by which I understand relationships between individuals, groups, organizations, systems, etc.

A culturally competent workforce is characterized by the staff’s ability to effectively produce positive change through understanding the cultural contexts of the families and communities they serve, and the willingness and skills to work within these contexts. In MonmouthCares, this means incorporating cultural uniqueness throughout the Wraparound process to ensure that all members of the CFT feel respected and included in the development and implementation of the individualized service plan (ISP).

Culturally Competent Organization

A culturally competent organization is characterized by:

- Acceptance and respect for difference
- Self-assessment regarding culture competence
- Careful attention to the dynamics of cultural differences
- Continuous expansion of cultural knowledge and resources
- Adaptation of service practices to meet the needs of diverse populations

In practice, the organization manifests its cultural competence in valuing diversity, having the capacity for regular self-assessment, being conscious of the dynamics among different cultures, institutionalizing cultural knowledge, and adapting practices to cultural diversity.

2019 – 2020 Cultural Competence Development Plan

Because MonmouthCares’ values and practice principles are rooted in cultural competence, our care management operations and family engagement process fully embrace the standards delineated in National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health and Health Care (<https://www.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/assets/pdfs/EnhancedNationalCLASStandards.pdf>)

The plan below was established by the MonmouthCares Cultural Competence and Diversity Committee, which held the kick-off meeting on February 26, 2019, established its mission, identified activities for the year, as well as the lead organizers:

2019-2020 Goals & Programs		Lead
1	Conduct organization-wide self-assessment	Chuni
2	Organize a cultural potluck	Asa Walker / Carlton Cummings
3	Enhance cultural knowledge about Jewish orthodox communities	Maria McNeary / Fred Battiato
4	Offer cultural awareness training/workshops	Chaniqua/Chuni
5	Incorporate cultural competence question(s) in quality calls to families	Noreen

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6	Include “Diversity Minute” at monthly staff meeting	Joan Aresco / Lisa Marie O’Connell
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Implementation Guideline

The MonmouthCares Employee Handbook explains our philosophy toward diversity and inclusion as follows:

MonmouthCares values the unique qualities, styles, backgrounds, and experiences different employees bring to the workplace, and intends to create a diverse workforce that mirrors the community we serve. We not only adhere to the equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws and diversity-related regulatory requirements in our hiring and performance management practices, but also encourage employees to bring forth diverse viewpoints in advancing our mission, enriching work life experiences, and solving business challenges.

Diversity refers to the similarities and differences among individuals with respect to personality and individual identity. Some of the dimensions of diversity include:

- Age
- Color
- Disability
- Ethnicity/national origin
- Family status
- Gender/gender identify
- Generation
- Language
- Life experiences
- Organizational function and level
- Physical characteristics
- Race
- Religion/belief/spirituality
- Sexual orientation
- Thinking patterns
- Veteran status

While diversity gives MonmouthCares the potential for greater creativity and innovation, inclusion is what enables us to realize the business benefits of this potential. We practice inclusion by making each employee and family we serve feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued as a team member. Because inclusion is a two-way accountability, we expect every employee to grant and accept inclusion from others when communicating and collaborating at work – in other words, demonstrating cultural competence by being sensitive to different cultural backgrounds as well as being effective in working with them.

Employees are required to take cultural competency and diversity training. Cultural competency is one of the key principles of our practice model, Wraparound, in managing care for the families we serve. We try to recruit staff that reflect the demographics of the community we serve. On an annual basis, we review our staff demographics and submit the Affirmative Action Employee Information Report to the State of New Jersey Division of Purchase & Property as part of the Contract Compliance Audit.