



Diversity

Covering:

CHCDIV001 Work with diverse people

Reference Materials

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Introduction

These reference material are provided to assist you in completing the Diversity workbook. Refer to the workbook for details of the assessment activities you are required to complete in the workbook.

Definitions

The concept of **diversity** encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences.

Cultural awareness is sensitivity to the similarities and differences that exist between two different cultures and the use of this sensitivity in effective communication with members of another cultural group.

Cultural safety involves actions that recognise, respect and nurture the unique cultural identity of a person and safely meet their needs, expectations and rights. It means working from the cultural perspective of the other person, not from your own perspective.

Cultural respect can be defined as the recognition, protection and continued advancement of the inherent rights, cultures and traditions of a particular culture.

Cultural competence means becoming aware of the cultural differences that exist, appreciating and having an understanding of those differences and accepting them. It also means being prepared to guard against accepting your own behaviours, beliefs and actions as the norm.

Personal cultural competence is the actions we personally take to expand our knowledge of other cultures and how we use that to shape service to those people.

Forms of Diversity

Cultural diversity

This type of diversity is related to each person's ethnicity and it's usually the set of norms we get from the society we were raised in or our family's values.

Race diversity

Race has to do with a person's grouping based on physical traits. Examples of races are Caucasian, African, Latino and Asian.

Religious diversity

This type of diversity refers to the presence of multiple religions and spiritual beliefs (including lack thereof) in the workplace.

Age diversity

Age diversity means working with people of different ages and, most importantly, generations.

Sex / Gender / Sexual orientation

Sex and gender can be used in the traditional sense of male and female employees. For example, you may sometimes hear the term “gender balance” used by companies trying to achieve a 50-50 balance between employees who identify as male and employees who identify as female. But, as gender is increasingly, the term “gender diversity” may be more appropriate, since there are multiple variations in gender and sexual orientation.

Disability

There are various types of disabilities or chronic conditions included here, ranging from mental to physical. Companies often make reasonable accommodations to help people with disabilities integrate into the workplace, such as installing ramps for wheelchairs or providing mental health support.

Discrimination Laws

Discrimination is a form of behaviour which involves treating someone in a way that disadvantages them because they belong to a particular group. Over the past 30 years the Commonwealth Government and the state and territory governments have introduced laws to help protect people from discrimination and harassment. The following laws operate at a federal level and the Australian Human Rights Commission has statutory responsibilities under them:

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984.

For further information, go to: <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/legal/legislation>

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Universal Declaration) is an international document that states basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled. The Universal Declaration was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948. Motivated by the experiences of the preceding world wars, the Universal Declaration was the first time that countries agreed on a comprehensive statement of inalienable human rights.

The Universal Declaration includes civil and political rights, like the right to life, liberty, free speech and privacy. It also includes economic, social and cultural rights, like the right to social security, health and education.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be viewed at:
<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

Culture

What is culture?

These days, the term 'culture' is closely related to the term 'community'. Culture includes the values and common behaviour of a group. Culture is what defines or describes one community in contrast to what defines or describes other communities.

For example you may have heard people say things like:

- 'Western culture is decadent and places too much emphasis on sex.'
- 'Relationship with the land is very important in Aboriginal culture'
- 'Football culture is macho and anti-women'.
- 'Our sales office has a culture of competition—its cut-throat there'
- 'The military in that country has an ingrained culture of corruption'

Whether or not you agree with such statements, you understand what they mean.

Sometimes people equate 'culture' with ethnic and/or religious background. While these elements are important in people's identity, so are many other elements. Elements include ethnic background, age, and sexual preference.

Being part of one culture doesn't stop you from being part of another. Someone could be part of both skateboarding and surfing subcultures. Someone whose mother is Aboriginal and whose father is Greek might relate to both the Aboriginal community and culture and the Greek community and culture. Some people in such situations might feel a stronger affiliation with one culture than another.

Workplace culture

These days, all workplace positions include communication roles, even if they are only part of someone's job description.

The way people communicate at work will depend on many different things, including:

- workplace culture
- the various cultures and norms of the staff, patients and customers
- the specific audience/s and/or participants in each communication
- the purposes of each communication
- the amount of detail and complexity that needs to be shared
- the time available for each communication.

Each workplace has its own culture, values and standards of behaviour that are considered normal and appropriate. Sometimes these things are formal. They might be structured into a work policy or mission statement. At other times they are informal norms and expectations.

Some common elements of workplace cultures are:

- type and standard of dress code, for example, whether people wear uniforms, business suits, overalls or neat casual clothes
- standard of language and level of politeness, for example, whether or not people swear
- level of commitment, for example, some workplaces expect a very high level of commitment, expecting large amounts of work to be done out of hours
- family friendliness, for example, whether people who need time off to care for sick children are frowned upon or supported
- level of commitment to the caller, for example, in workplaces customer service is paramount

The importance of attitude

Not surprisingly, a positive, respectful attitude is one of the most helpful aids to communication. If we genuinely have good will and respect toward someone, we are much more likely to find appropriate and effective strategies for communicating with them. Respect and attitude are precursors for good listening – and everyone wants to be listened to.

Respect and a positive attitude are important factors in communicating with everybody – those from our own culture/s and those from other cultures.

Misunderstandings

Misunderstandings can occur easily. They are even more likely when we converse with someone whose first language and culture are different to ours. In such cases we need to be open-minded and patient. And we may need to clarify things more often to ensure we are accurately receiving the message.

What strategies might work to avoid or overcome such misunderstandings? Try:

- asking someone about their level of understanding on a subject to help you pitch the language and jargon levels appropriately
- to get better at understanding accents by practising at hearing them.
- listening carefully to someone to know if they understood us.

Culture and Diversity

Over 20% of the Australian population were born overseas. It is important to remember that in 1788, 100% of the people who lived in Australia were indigenous people. Indigenous people now make up around 1.8% of the population. It is easy to see from these statistics that a very large proportion of Australians come from a migrant heritage.

A multicultural society is one that not only recognises but actively encourages people from a variety of backgrounds to retain their language and culture. However, culture is not just related to immigration. It is about the knowledge, values and beliefs of a society.

When working with people from a similar background, there is a shared language, similar gestures, and a shared understanding of the dominant cultural values. People are more likely to be familiar with culturally appropriate boundaries such as knowing when to shake hands or touch or not touch.

Different cultures have evolved differently, based on different political, social and religious histories, adaptation to different climatic and environmental conditions and types of food available, as well as availability of resources for economic development. Different cultures also have different ways that people relate to each other, ways of expressing feelings, using gestures, and protocols for communication, for example people from Mediterranean cultures kiss once on each cheek when they meet but Asian culture are more inclined to nod or bow.

Working with people from different cultural backgrounds can mean that you need to be aware of possible cultural differences, and respond in a culturally appropriate manner

whenever possible. If you are not sure of the meaning of certain actions or gestures you might need to clarify with your colleague or supervisor.

Cultural Attitudes

Prejudice, Racism and Discrimination: These terms are often used almost interchangeably and the distinction between them is not always clear.

Prejudice is based on the emotions that are triggered when 'outsiders' are encountered. Prejudice is:

- A preconceived opinion or feeling, either favourable or unfavourable, often formed without sufficient knowledge or evidence.
- Unreasonable feelings, opinions or attitudes, especially of a hostile nature, directed towards a racial, religious, or other group identifiably different from our own.
- Negative personal perceptions about individuals because they are members of a particular group.

Racism is based on a belief in the ranking of races from inferior to superior. This belief can be used to support and justify the maintenance of an unequal balance of power.

Racism is:

- The perpetuation of a belief that each race has distinctive characteristics resulting in some races being superior to others.
- The assertion of the rights and interests of a particular racial group who assume superiority and have the power to enforce this to the detriment of other racial groups.
- The negative treatment of a minority, identified by racial background, as scapegoats for social stresses, injustices, or conflicts of interest affecting the whole of society.
- The conduct generated by the belief that some races, however identified, are inferior as people, and therefore, their interests and feelings do not deserve to be regarded as equally important as those of any so-called superior race.

Discrimination is based on behaviour - how people are the target of certain behaviours because of their belonging to a different group. Discrimination is:

- A form of behaviour which involves treating someone in a way that disadvantages them because they belong to a particular group.

- Acting towards a certain group of people in a way where the net result is that members suffer because they belong to that group.
- Imposing a requirement that unfairly disadvantages certain groups.
- Structuring an organisation or a system to maintain the advantages of certain groups who share the same values and assumptions.

Our culture influences everything in our lives but most importantly, it influences our behaviour (as in the examples above). It influences how we react to people, questions, situations, sickness, our surroundings etc. Good interaction and communication with people often depends on a good understanding of their culture.

It is often easier to interact successfully with people from our own culture because what they say and do is familiar and predictable. Interaction and communication with people from other cultures is often more difficult. Their reactions sometimes seem improbable and illogical because the same level of familiarity and predictability is not there.

We grow up with the view that we do things our way because that is the right way or perhaps the only way that something should be done. Understanding another's cultural perspective is not the same as liking it. There is no requirement to diminish our own cultural preferences just because the preferences of others are better understood. There is, however, a requirement to allow differences to be just that – differences.

In our work, we treat and transport people from many cultural backgrounds different to our own. What we must never do is allow our personal feelings to influence our care and management of any patient, regardless of their race, religion or beliefs.

Ethical Considerations

Health workers can face ethical dilemmas in their work. Patient autonomy is the most basic right of every individual and an example of a medical ethics dilemma. Autonomy means "self-rule" and involves the right of an individual to make choices that may go against a health worker's treatment advice concerning treatment, or non-treatment, of an existing health issue.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture

The negative impacts of racial and economic disadvantage and a series of past government policies, including segregation, displacement and separation of families has contributed to the mistrust held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards government services and systems.

In today's Western dominant society, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to be a marginalised and socially disadvantaged minority group. Compared to other Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience significantly varied outcomes related to health, education, employment and housing. Discrimination, racism and lack of cultural understanding mean that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still experience inequality and social injustice.

People's cultural beliefs, values and world-views influence thinking, behaviours and interactions with others. It is important to reflect without judgement before, during and after interacting with people whose beliefs, values, world-views and experiences are different to your own.

Access and read Queensland Health's Communicating effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people available at:

https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/151923/communicating.pdf