

Head Start Multicultural Principles

The seminal 1991 Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs and the revision entitled, “Revisiting and Updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five: Addressing Culture and Home Language in Head Start Program Systems & Services” (Early Head Start National Resource Center @ ZERO TO THREE) represent Head Start’s commitment to individualizing services so that every child and family feels respected and valued and is able to grow in accepting and appreciating difference. Each of the ten Multicultural Principles below are significant to the planning and programming of Head Start and Early Head Start services in response to community data (geographical, ethnic and racial composition) gathered by both the Community Assessment and program Self Assessment. They are also particularly relevant to the delivery of mental health consultation within these settings. These principles can also guide and reinforce a consultant’s personal development toward cultural competence and professional approach to working with diverse communities.

Principle 1: *Every individual is rooted in culture.*

Cultural competence upholds the intrinsic nature of culture and its influence on our beliefs, values, attitudes and standards of behavior so that we “perceive, frame and respond” in ways that reflect our culture.

Principle 2: *The cultural groups represented in the communities and families of each Head Start program are the primary sources of culturally relevant programming.*

Cultural competence recognizes the key role of families and communities in tailoring programming to meet their unique preferences and needs related to care and education and services and supports for children, families and the community at large.

Principle 3: *Culturally relevant and diverse programming requires learning accurate information about the cultures of different groups and discarding stereotypes.*

Cultural competence is achieved by identifying and understanding the strengths, needs resiliency, and help-seeking behaviors of individuals and families. Culturally competent individuals and organizations plan and implement services that are tailored or matched to the unique cultural and linguistic preferences and needs of individuals, children, families, organizations, and communities served

Principle 4: *Addressing cultural relevance in making curriculum choices and adaptations is a necessary, developmentally appropriate practice.*

Culturally competent practices in programming and service delivery are driven by client-preferred choices, not by culturally blind (activities interventions that treat every child and family the same) or culturally free interventions (those interventions or activities that do not take culture into consideration).

Principle 5: *Every individual has the right to maintain his or her identity while acquiring the skills required to function in our diverse society.*

Cultural competence acknowledges that individuals, families and communities may desire varying levels of acculturation and assimilation and acceptance of the values, beliefs and practices of the larger society.

Principle 6: *Effective programs for children who speak languages other than English require continued development of their first language while the acquisition of English is facilitated.*

Guiding values and principles for linguistic competence stress the importance of providing programming, services and supports that are delivered in the preferred language and/or mode of delivery of the population served.

Principle 7: *Culturally relevant programming requires staff who reflect and are responsive to the community and families served.*

Cultural competence embraces the principles of recruiting and maintaining staff that are reflective of the families and communities served by a program or organizations and underscores the need for equal access and non-discriminatory practices in service delivery and hiring.

Principle 8: *Multicultural programming for children enables children to develop an awareness of, respect for, and appreciation of individual cultural differences.*

Cultural competence requires the development of awareness, knowledge and skills to assist in honoring and accepting diversity and to enhance capacity to interact appropriately with people who are from different racial, ethnic, cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds.

Principle 9: *Culturally relevant and diverse programming examines and challenges institutional and personal bias.*

Cultural competence requires an organization and its staff to acquire cultural knowledge and explore and examine issues of bias, discrimination, and stereotyping through self reflection and personal and organizational self-assessment.

Principle 10: *Culturally relevant and diverse programming and practices are incorporated in all systems and services and are beneficial to all adults and children.*

Culturally competent programs and organizations must support and in some cases mandate, the incorporation of cultural knowledge into all levels of programming, including policies, practices, structures, attitudes and behaviors of all staff, consultants, families and volunteers.

Source:

Early Head Start National Resource Center @ ZERO TO THREE, 2010. Revisiting and Updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five: Addressing Culture and Home Language in Head Start Program Systems & Services, Washington DC: Office of Head Start.