You Just Don’t Understand!

Essentials for Overcoming Communication Barriers

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Discussion points

Building a common framework

How culture and language influence communication

Three pillars of effective communication

Applying your knowledge
We communicate in all kinds of ways, all day, every day:

- Direct meetings and conversations
- Our dress, body language, and greetings
- Telephone, e-mail, memos, and letters
- Brochures (ours and others we share with individuals we serve)
- How we interpret plans, orders, directions, or decisions
- Information on websites
- Referrals to or from other services
- Navigation around facilities
Unified Communication Approach

- Literacy
- Cultural Competency
- Language Access
Essentials for Overcoming Communication Barriers
Why Learn About Literacy?

- Information literacy
- Technology literacy
- Visual literacy
- Data literacy
- Statistical literacy
- Critical reasoning
Why Learn about Literacy?

The Cost of Low Literacy

Illiteracy has tremendous consequences, but these consequences go beyond the affected individual. They affect families, communities and the entire society.

Annual U.S. Tab For Low Literacy

- $80 Billion in lost worker productivity
- $106-236 Billion in low health literacy each year
- $225 Billion in unemployment benefits, lost taxes and crime

Did You Know?

- The less education someone has, the lower their numeracy abilities and, therefore, the lower their financial literacy skills are.

Every dollar invested in adult literacy yields $7.14 in return.

literacypartners.org #fightilliteracy
Why Learn About Literacy?

US READING LITERACY
Percentage of the population of each state that has below a 5th grade level of literacy

Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services
Why Learn About Literacy?

LITERACY IN THE WORLD

GLOBAL ILLITERATE POPULATION

775,000,000

16%

Nearly 16% of world’s population is ILLITERATE

ADULT ILLITERATE POPULATION

775 MILLION

64% are WOMEN

YOUTH ILLITERATE POPULATION

122 MILLION

51% are GIRLS
Think…

GNINAELC — Ot erussa hgih ecnamrofrep,
yllacidoirep naelc eht epat sdaeh dna natspac revenehw uoy eciton na noitalumucca fo tsud dna nворb-der edixo selcitrap.
Cleaning — To assure high performance, periodically clean the tape heads and capstan whenever you notice an accumulation of dust and red-brown oxide particles.
So What Can You Do?
### Use Plain, Noncomplex Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Word?</th>
<th>Consider Using...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Learning/thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>Enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive</td>
<td>Too much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routinely</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>How you feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>By mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid</td>
<td>Stay away from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option</td>
<td>Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>Work together</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
So What Can You Do?

Ventura County Great American Smoke out Loteria

Stick to one idea at a time

Write as if you were talking to a friend
Create a Shame-Free Environment

So What Can You Do?

no shame
Essentials for Overcoming Communication Barriers

CULTURAL RELEVANCE
Understanding other cultures is great but....

Each person’s unique cultural background influences his/her health beliefs, attitudes, and practices.

Everyone brings their own cultural backgrounds, values styles, beliefs, and biases to encounters with service providers.

BUT understanding YOUR own cultural background, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors and how they may be affecting your communication IS MORE IMPORTANT to building an effective relationship with families from diverse backgrounds.
Nonverbal Communication varies greatly among people, often leading to cross-cultural misunderstanding.
KEEP CALM BECAUSE IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU
Rethinking Culture

Culture can be....

THICK

THIN

COMPARTMENTALIZED
Key Points on Culture

- Dynamic web of meaning
- Often outside our awareness
- Influences how and with whom we can connect
- Everyone has it
1. Proactively work to eliminate inequities in your practice
2. Recognize the lifelong commitment
3. Commit to equal quality and fairness for every family
Awareness of internalized beliefs, values, norms, and biases.

Understanding how ethnocentrism influences our interactions.

Understanding how culture impacts behaviors around health, illness, and health seeking practices.

Awareness of demographic changes and implications to your services.

Awareness of cross cultural variation in verbal and non-verbal communication.
Essentials for Overcoming Communication Barriers

LANGUAGE ACCESS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
What is Linguistic Competence?

The capacity of an organization and staff to communicate effectively, and convey information in a way that is easily understood by diverse audiences. This includes individuals with limited English proficiency, those who have health literacy or literacy barriers and individuals with disabilities.
WHY LANGUAGE SERVICES?
It’s not just a “nice” thing to do, it’s important for Educated and healthy communities.

- Can help lead to positive outcomes
- Better use of the system
- Fairer outcomes
- Quicker resolution
- Stronger relationships
- Poor communication can encourage negative outcomes
- Misunderstandings of what is needed
- Individual difficulty in following instructions
- Understanding of plans and, ultimately, both the actual and perceived fairness

### Top 10 Non-English Languages Spoken in Virginia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Percentage of population (as of 2010)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>6.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>0.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>0.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese (including Mandarin)</td>
<td>0.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>0.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>0.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>0.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>0.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>0.32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Percent of Virginia's Foreign Born Population that speaks English less than "very well"

- All Foreign Born: 45%
- Foreign born who entered 2000 or later: 58%

Percent of Virginia's Recent Foreign Immigrant Households that are linguistically isolated

- All Foreign Born: 26%
- Foreign born who entered 2000 or later: 39%

Source: 2006 American Community Survey

Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services
It’s important for Compliance

“No person shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal assistance.”

—Civil Rights Act of 1964

Organizations are required to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by English Language Learners.
Federal law requires programs that educate children with limited English proficiency to be:

1. based on a sound educational theory;
2. adequately supported, with adequate and effective staff and resources, so that the program has a realistic chance of success; and
3. periodically evaluated and, if necessary, revised.

www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/qa-ell.html
Moving from a state of bliss

“Between my broken Spanish and her broken English...we got by...”

THIS IS NOT LANGUAGE ACCESS
It’s important for Quality

Untrained Interpreters

- 52% Omission
- 16% False Fluency
- 13% Substitution
- 10% Editorialization
- 8% Addition

Trained interpreters:

- Accurately interpreted most (74%) of the conversation (Range: 47%-98%)

- Had higher accuracy during non-technical portions of the discussion in comparison with the technical portions.

Moving from a state of bliss
It's important for Quality

Children as Interpreters
Moving from a State of Bliss
Avoid the crisis

WHAT CAN YOU DO?
Ability to assess consumer’s language skills and their ability to communicate fully with the service providers

Ability to use interpreters effectively

Ability to realistically assess our own language proficiency
Speak in relatively short segments; pause so there is time to interpret.

Ask interpreter to interpret everything into the first person (avoid “he said, she said”).

Ask open-ended questions and talk directly to the person.

Avoid using slang or idioms:
- “A bundle of nerves”
- “Chip off the ole block”
- “No pain, no gain”

Speak about one thing at a time.

What can you do?
What can you do?

- Individual’s Right to Know
- Interpreting
- Translation
- Way-finding
- Community Involvement
- Training
- Assistive Technology/Communication Tools
- Signage
✓ MISSION CRITICAL
✓ INCLUDE FUNDING IN ANNUAL BUDGET
✓ TRAIN ALL STAFF ON THE POLICY AND HOW TO WORK WITH LANGUAGE PROVIDERS
✓ CONSIDER A DIFFERENTIAL FOR BILINGUAL STAFF
✓ REQUIRE TESTING AND TRAINING FOR BILINGUAL STAFF
Moving from a state of bliss

Only in your mother tongue can you best say what you are not thinking.

Wolfgang Mocker