

Executive Summary

Policy makers in Oregon and across the nation have increasingly prioritized the need for a health care system that respects the cultural differences of individuals and a workforce that understands how to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services and uniquely interact with clients from diverse backgrounds. As such, the Oregon Health Authority chartered the Cultural Competence Continuing Education Committee to explore opportunities to promote cultural competence continuing education for the current health professional workforce.

Based on Oregon-specific and national data that demonstrate a consistent pattern of disparities for culturally and socially diverse groups, a growing evidence base indicating the effectiveness of cultural competence training for health professionals and a desire by many licensing boards, professional associations and health systems organizations to address cultural competence for their workforce, the Committee recommends cultural competence continuing education as a strategy for eliminating health inequities and achieving the Oregon Health Policy Boards' triple aim of improving health, improving care and lowering costs. As such, the committee makes the following recommendations for advancing cultural competence in Oregon:

Recommended Definition and Standards for Cultural Competence Continuing Education

The Committee recommends the following definition and standards be adopted by the Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Health Professional Licensing Boards and applied for approving cultural competency trainings in Oregon:

Recommended Definition

A life-long process of examining values and beliefs, of developing and applying an inclusive approach to health care practice in a manner that recognizes the context and complexities of provider-patient interactions and preserves the dignity of individuals, families and communities.

This is an abridged definition. For the complete definition, please see page 11.

Recommended Standards

The Committee developed standards for cultural competence continuing education options to assist the Oregon Health Authority, Coordinated Care Organizations and Health Licensing Boards in approving training options. Standards marked "essential" indicate the standards that trainings should meet to receive approval. Standards marked "advanced" serve to provide additional guidance related to key cultural competence topics to assist in the development and delivery of training options. The process of developing these standards included conducting a review and evaluation of local and national recommendations for cultural competence definitions, trainings and continuing education options and disseminating a survey to over 160 health care providers and administrators to elicit feedback on the committee's recommendations.

For a list of the Committee's recommended standards, please see page 11.

Recommendations for Advancing Cultural Competence Continuing Education for Health Professionals in Oregon

The Committee makes the following recommendations to the Oregon Health Authority, Oregon's Health Professional Licensing Boards, Coordinated Care Organizations and developers of continuing education curriculum:

Recommendations to the Oregon Health Authority:

1. Adopt and apply standards for cultural competency continuing education
2. Require cultural competence continuing education for agency staff and contractors
3. Support curriculum development
4. Develop centralized website with a training registry of existing and approved cultural competence continuing education options
5. Provide funding to support licensing board implementation of cultural competence continuing education for re-licensure
6. Staff a standing Cultural Competence Continuing Education Committee for ongoing assessment of continuing education options

Recommendations to Oregon's Health Professional Licensing Boards

1. Adopt and apply standards for cultural competence continuing education
2. Include cultural competency in ethics requirements for re-licensure
3. Encourage licensees to pursue any current cultural competence continuing education opportunities and if board support exists, a mandate for all licensees.
4. Establish infrastructure to monitor licensee engagement in cultural competence continuing education
5. Encourage related professional associations to leverage funds to support licensing boards in implementing cultural competence continuing education and the development of training options

Recommendations to Coordinated Care Organizations

1. Adopt and apply standards for cultural competence continuing education
2. Require cultural competence continuing education for providers and staff
3. Support funding to develop continuing education options

Recommendations for Trainers and Developers of Continuing Education for Health Care Professionals

1. Apply the recommended standards for cultural competence continuing education when developing trainings and embed into currently available trainings.

Recommendations for Advancing Cultural Competency at an Organizational Level

The committee recognizes that creating a culturally competent health system requires both an individual and organizational approach. It is not enough to simply train individuals. If we do not embed cultural competency within organizations, then health professionals working at an individual level may not reach their highest potential to improve outcomes for their client base. Organizational cultural competency requires ongoing assessment of all aspects of the organization from the waiting room to the exam room to the back office.

Recommendation to the Oregon Health Authority:

Given the need for an organizational approach to advancing cultural competency, the Committee recommends that the Oregon Health Authority charter a committee to:

- Explore promising culturally competent organizational models
- Develop a definition and standards for organizational cultural competence
- Explore models that could support organizational cultural competence within Oregon's health systems
- Develop recommendations for advancing organizational cultural competency in Oregon