

# A Guide to Providing Culturally and Linguistically Competent Healthcare

## What is cultural competence?

*A set of interpersonal skills that allow individuals to increase their understanding, appreciation, acceptance, and respect for cultural differences and similarities within, among and between groups and the sensitivity to know how these differences influence relationships with patients. This requires a willingness and ability to draw on community-based values, traditions and customs, to devise strategies to better meet culturally diverse patient needs and to work with knowledgeable persons of and from the community in developing focused interactions, communications and support.*

## Did You Know?

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Studies have found that culturally and linguistically diverse groups and those with limited English proficiency experience less adequate access to care, lower quality of care, and poorer health status outcomes.

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In the year 2000, racial and ethnic minorities comprised 25% of the US population. By 2050, this will reach 50%.

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Culturally and linguistically diverse group members currently comprise 50% of managed Medicaid membership.

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In Illinois, 28% of those receiving Medicaid are benefits are African-American and 24% of Medicaid beneficiaries are Hispanic or Latino.

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## Providers Responsibility:

**1.**

IlliniCare Health members understand that they have access to medical interpreters, signers, and TTY services to facilitate communication without cost to them.

**2.**

Care is provided with consideration of the members' race/ethnicity, language, and its impact/influence of the members' health or illness.

**3.**

The office staff responsible for data collection must make reasonable attempts to collect race and language specific member information.

**4.**

When developing treatment plans and clinical guidelines, take into consideration the member's race, country of origin, native language, social class, religion, mental or physical abilities, heritage, acculturation, age, gender, sexual orientation and other characteristics that may result in a different perspective or decision-making process.

**5.**

Office sites have posted and printed materials in English, Spanish, or other prevailing languages within the region.

## Tips for working with interpreters:



**Family and friends are not the same as a professional interpreter.** They are more likely to modify what the patient and/or provider has actually said in their effort to be helpful. A professional interpreter does more than interpret for the patient. Their job is to help facilitate communication.



Keep your **sentences short**, pausing to permit interpretation. Say one longer sentence or three or four short ones, and then stop in a natural place to let the interpreter pass your message along. The interpreter may need to hear the whole sentence before she can even start to interpret it.



Plan to allow **enough time** for the interpreted sessions.



Ask only **one question** at a time.



**Speak directly** to your patient and not to the interpreter. The interpreter is not allowed to have side conversations with you in a professional situation.



Be prepared to **repeat yourself** in different words if your message is not understood. If a response doesn't seem to fit with what you said, go back and repeat what you said in different words.



**Avoid jargon** and technical terms.



**Check** to see if the message is understood.

## What can occur if culturally competent healthcare is not provided:

- Member's feelings of being insulted or treated rudely
- Member's reluctance and fear of making future contact with the provider
- Member's confusion and misunderstanding
- Member's feelings of being uncared for, looked down on and devalued
- Parents' resistance to seek help for their children
- Unfilled prescriptions
- Missed appointments
- Misdiagnosis due to lack of information sharing
- Wasted time for the member and provider
- Increased grievances or complaints

## How can I learn more?

There are numerous resources available to physicians, nurses and those working in the medical field to receive training on Cultural Competency.

- On the Office of Minority Health's website, you can find "A Physician's Practical Guide to Culturally Competent Care." By taking this course online, you can earn up to nine CME credits, or nine contact hours for free.
- The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services "Think Cultural Health" website includes classes, guides and tools to assist you in providing culturally competent care.

## What does IlliniCare Health do?

IlliniCare Health is dedicated to lessening healthcare disparities for minorities. IlliniCare Health has a Committee focused on directing initiatives to provide culturally and linguistically competent care for our members. Currently, IlliniCare Health provides:

- Language Line services available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in 140 languages.
- All information disseminated by IlliniCare Health is available in other formats including Spanish, Audio, Braille, etc. at no cost.
- TDD/TTY access for members who are hearing impaired.
- If requested, IlliniCare Health will provide a translator at your office or hospital to facilitate communication and care for members where English is not their first language.
- All staff and providers are trained in cultural competency. IlliniCare Health can also provide additional cultural and linguistic competency training to providers upon request.
- We recruit and hire a culturally and ethnically diverse staff.
- We develop a racially, ethnically and culturally diverse provider network.