



## Culture Connections

### August 2020 News & Updates

We first want to acknowledge the ongoing concerns regarding COVID-19 and affirm that we are hopeful and solution focused in supporting our community of providers and clients. We have made temporary changes in our services to reflect the needs and the directives from the CDC and state, and we encourage you to stay connected via our webinars, newsletters, web-site and via email/phone for updates and support.

**Our mission is to improve mental health services and outcomes in northern NJ by enhancing the cultural competence of mental health professionals...**

And we're excited to share with you some news about our program and team, as well as some resources and upcoming services!

Check out the news below and online for more updates. Have a great day, full of healthy connections!  
#WhereHopeMeetsPossibility

Visit our Website

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### Call to Action

#### Advocate for Racial Equality and Justice

NJ Cultural Competence Training Centers' response to George Floyd's murder and the continued advocacy for the dismantling of systemic racism and injustices: [Response to Floyd murder and systemic racism](#)

#### Shape Your Community's Future

**Fill out the Census** : [United States Census 2020](#)

**Register to Vote** : [The New Jersey Division of Elections](#)

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### Upcoming Training

#### UPDATE: Annual Cultural Competence Conference Postponed to June 21-22, 2021

"Overcoming Incomplete Impressions: Dismantling Conscious and Unconscious Bias in Behavioral Health" *Presented by Family Connections and the Center For Family Services*  
Stay tuned [here](#) for updates when they become available.

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### Service Spotlight

#### The Charge for Leadership: Hope, Fearlessness and Change

*'Effective leaders accept discomfort and develop humility in acknowledging how biases and lack of knowledge may affect their understanding of cultural competence' says the leader of DMHAS's cultural competence initiative.*

We asked Elizabeth Conte, the Workforce Development Manager for DMHAS and the state lead of the initiative for cultural competence, how leaders can be brave in their roles as they promote cultural competence in their circles and in their organizations.



**1. What do you think stops leaders from discussing cultural competency in their everyday work and why is that detrimental to an organization?**

"In many scenarios leaders don't know how to broach the topic of cultural competence in the workplace. In other cases, leaders may be worried about their own lack of knowledge and limited understanding of cultural competence, including issues of race and social disparities. Other leaders may be fearful of saying the wrong thing and reluctant to take a risk to open up the conversation and admit they are still learning."

**2. What attitudes do you think leaders need to have when learning about cultural competence?**

Leaders need to demonstrate openness and flexibility to fully recognize and comprehend the importance of cultural competence. Effective leaders accept discomfort and develop humility in acknowledging how biases and lack of knowledge may affect their understanding of cultural competence. Learning about cultural competence requires fearlessness to take risks in addressing issues and seeking answers. Finally, leaders need to have an attitude of hope and recognize that change is possible.

**3. What are important steps for leaders to take in addressing their own cultural competence to lead a larger effort in this area?**

"It is essential for leaders to examine their biases, stereotypes, privilege, and power to successfully guide their agency towards cultural competence. Steps leaders can take on their journey are engaging in professional development activities, attending workshops, reading and viewing programming about diverse others, and communicating and reaching out to colleagues, staff, and community members. Effective leaders immerse themselves in other cultures, attend diverse events, engage in the neighborhoods where they serve, and use data to inform decision-making. Through this self-discovery and modeling, leaders create safe spaces and open communication. Employees, in turn, create those same spaces when working with people from diverse backgrounds."

**4. What are ways a leader can "manage up" with respect to getting superiors or boards on "on board" with adopting cultural competence as a framework or lens?**

"Leaders can encourage executive leadership and board members to adopt cultural competence by sharing examples of how service delivery can be enhanced when employees understand and embrace diverse people. In addition, leaders can use research-based data to emphasize how culture impacts individuals and the staff that work with them. Leaders who have hiring responsibility can make decisions that are reflective of the diversity of populations they serve. Finally, leaders can "manage up" and become role models by not ignoring issues of race, ethnicity, gender, etc. and promote open communication, discussion and the sharing of ideas."

**5. What do you envision for DMHAS agencies on their journeys to cultural competence?**

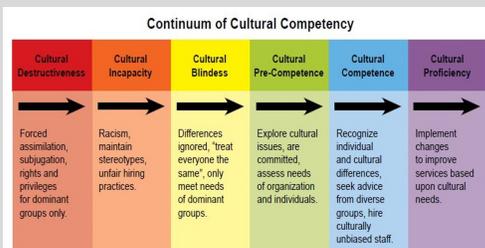
DMHAS's vision for agencies on their journey to cultural competence is for them to develop plans that are truly representative of the action steps that promote change. Goals and objectives are most successful when they provide inclusion for all individuals, including employees, community members, and individuals served. For example, all agencies should be striving for cultural competence excellence that moves beyond mandated training and embodies a culture where individuals are heard, welcomed, and celebrated. Ultimately, leaders will move their agency toward positive change, recognize that cultural competence is a journey and not an event, and reduce social disparities that perpetuate racial and ethnic minorities being less likely to receive needed care and more likely to receive poor quality care when treated.

**6. What is your own motivation for supporting this initiative?**

Through my years of working as a counselor, counselor educator, and clinical supervisor, I experienced and learned firsthand the importance of challenging and broaching the subjects of race, ethnicity, etc., with staff and clients. Without an understanding and appreciation for others' experience of culture, we are unable to provide the proper treatment and guidance for individuals to achieve optimal wellness. In my opinion, lack of cultural competence is a disservice to clients and communities and it inhibits our own personal and professional growth. When clients are reluctant to bring up issues of culture and race for fear of how counselors (and other healthcare professionals) will view them, practitioners fail them. Advocating and ensuring that our workforce does not ignore culture, social determinants, and issues of intersectionality that influence social disparity in order to provide effective behavioral healthcare is the motivation beyond my overwhelming support of this initiative.

Learn more about how cultural competency shapes the [Family Connections team and services](#).

## Striving for Cultural Proficiency in 2020!



### Awareness

### Cultural Caucus: Addressing Systemic Racism in the Way We Lead

**Leadership has it's own culture. While we may not always acknowledge it, it can be a culture that involves many challenges as members try to uncover the best ways to lead that positively impact individuals, large groups, and organizations at the**

*same time that they are on their own journeys of related to cultural competence.*

**August Event Highlights:**

- Successful partnership of NJ's two Cultural Competence Training Centers in delivering the leadership series sponsored by DMHAS
- **Over 100 people registered for the series; leadership from over 35 organizations across 13 counties attended the leadership caucus in the month of August where we delved into systemic racism in leadership with the hope of creating change in the way we lead.**
- For the weekly sessions, an average of 47 people attended. There was leadership including executive directors, senior management and some **board members were also in attendance.**
- Activities included breakout group discussions, polls, videos, surveys, which were used to engage the rooms; and **a follow up to the series has already been requested!**

So more to come and thank you to all the brave leaders for showing commitment to cultural competence journeys!

**More Awareness Learning Resources:**

- **August 4: Former President Barack Obama's Birthday**
- **August 9: National Women's Day in South Africa**
- **August 14: Pakistan Independence Day**
- **August 15: Indian Independence Day**
- **August 19: Islamic New Year; World Humanitarian Day**
- **August 21: National Senior Citizens Day**
- **August 26: Women's Equality Day**

Have resources to inform organizations and colleagues about minorities and health data? Share [here](#) for our growing resource library.