

Program Title: Department of Social and Health Services Cultural Competence Program

State: Washington

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1. Please provide a brief description of this program.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is integrating Cultural Competence into the very fabric of their organization to promote respect and understanding for diverse cultures, social groups, and individual attributes both internally within our workforce and externally with the clients that we serve.

This comprehensive approach includes a Cultural Competence policy, guidelines, self-assessments, training, performance based contracts, talent management, accountability measures, and partnership and outreach with the communities they serve.

The Cultural Competence policy and guidelines were developed by a workgroup of representatives from across agency administrations and divisions. They provide a framework for cultural competence and culturally responsive service delivery. All administrations within the agency are developing action plans that support and guide staff in delivering DSHS services in a culturally competent manner.

DSHS defines culture in a broad sense, to include values, beliefs, experiences and cultural attitudes contributing to a person's sense of identity. Cultural responsiveness is the capacity to respond to the cultural differences and issues of a diverse work group,

which may include such subtle differences as communication style, problem-solving, values, conflict resolution styles, etc.

2. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

The Cultural Competence Workgroup was formed in September 2010. The Operational phase began November 2011.

3. Why was this program created? (What problem[s] or issues does it address?)

A critical-need was identified for a broad-based plan to address the agency's service delivery demands and the demographic changes occurring in the State; align the Department's values with its client base, stakeholders, and external partners; and recognize the needs of our own staff.

4. Why is this program a new and creative method?

The Cultural Competence Policy is distinct. It transcends diversity issues in state government as strictly Affirmative Action goals. The Cultural Competence program is based on the concept that cultural competency is a *process*, not a goal, in the delivery of social and health services and talent management. The policy targets the need for programs, employees and service providers to continually improve their service delivery in ways that are culturally relevant, responsive, and competent. This is the new *standard* of doing business in DSHS, and we embed cultural competency into every aspect of our business—including employee training, evaluations, and development plans; client interface; contract/procurement; and performance reviews. A key component of the policy is the promotion of respect and understanding among diverse cultures and social groups, and the recognition of key attributes of the individual employee.

5. What was the program's start up costs? (Provide detailed information about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

To date, the start-up costs have been negligible; the impact has been more in time and effort. Future costs are anticipated for on-line and classroom training development.

Training plans include developing a cost-effective train-the-trainer model, with an initial fee paid to a vendor. Train-the-trainer will allow DSHS to train all 16,000 employees statewide. Ongoing training will also be embedded in existing and new agency-wide or program specific courses.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

There have been minimal costs in administration and in the use of existing staff. Mostly, the majority of training will be embedded in DSHS' existing training.

7. How is this program funded?

Funding costs have been absorbed in our operations rather than any unique funding.

8. Did this program originate in your state?

Yes.

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If yes, how does this program differ?

Similar cultural competency programs exist in the health and medical industry. This program is comprehensive in that it includes an agency-wide policy, guidelines, a code of conduct, and a training plan.

10. How do you measure the success of this program?

In 2011 DSHS conducted a baseline survey of employees to assess employee sentiment related to culture (inclusiveness, respect in the workplace, etc). Every two years a follow-up survey will be conducted and analyzed to determine what changes have occurred, what challenges still exist, and how to reset our strategies accordingly.

11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The program has grown based on the number of organizations and administrations that have become involved in the Cultural Competence Workgroup meetings. Programs and administrations are currently creating their action plans related to the cultural competency policy and guidelines.