

# PRIMER CULTURAL COMPETENCE



## Incorporating Cultural Competence into Your Comprehensive Plan



Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America  
National Coalition Institute

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*CADCA's National Coalition Institute, developed in 2002 by an Act of Congress, serves as a center for training, technical assistance, evaluation, research, and capacity building for community substance misuse coalitions throughout the United States. The Institute developed these primers to serve as a guideline for coalitions navigating the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s Strategic Prevent Framework (SPF). These primers highlight the CADCA model of prevention and its applied uses to the SPF. Each primer is designed to stand alone and work with others in the series. Research suggests that prevention of substance use and misuse before it starts is the most effective and cost-efficient way to reduce substance use and its associated costs. Coalitions are critical to the success of prevention efforts in local communities. Through your work in engaging key sectors of the community, we can create population-level change and positive, sustainable outcomes that can truly change the world. To learn more about our work, visit the CADCA website, [www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org).*

—Arthur T. Dean  
Major General, U.S. Army, Retired  
Chairman and CEO  
CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America)

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# INTRODUCTION

## Drug-Free Communities Support Program

In 1997, Congress enacted the Drug-Free Communities Support Program (DFC) to provide grants to community-based coalitions to serve as catalysts for multi-sector participation to reduce local substance use problems. By 2018, nearly 2,000 local coalitions received funding to work on two main goals:

- Goal 1: Establish and strengthen collaboration among communities, private nonprofit agencies, and federal, state, local, and tribal governments to support the efforts of community coalitions to prevent and reduce substance abuse among youth.
- Goal 2: Reduce substance abuse among youth and, over time, among adults by addressing the factors in a community that increase the risk of substance abuse and promoting the factors that minimize the risk of substance abuse.\*

\*For the purposes of the DFC grant, “youth” is defined as 18 years of age and younger.

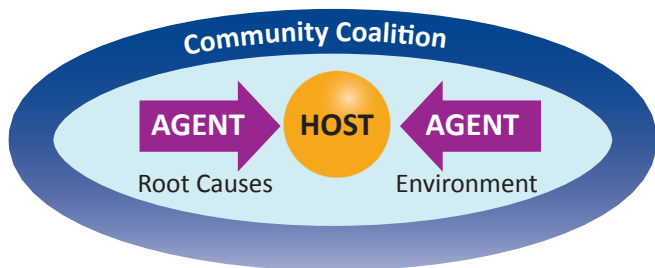
## The Public Health Approach

Effective prevention efforts focus on impacting the individual, peers, families, and the overall community environment. It is the role of coalitions to reduce substance use in the larger community by implementing comprehensive, multi-strategy approaches using a public health approach to prevention.

Community coalitions use the **public health approach** to look at what substances (the **agent**) are being used by youth and adults (the **host**) in the community and to impact those conditions (root causes in the **environment**) that promote the use of substances and strengthen those conditions that promote and support healthy choices and behaviors.

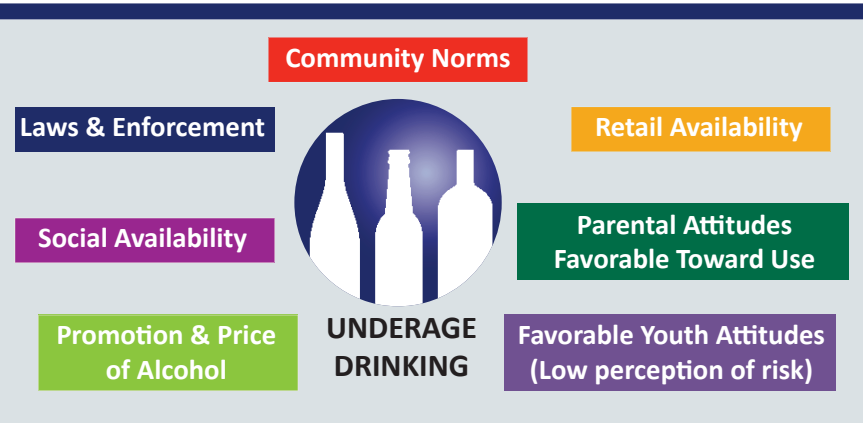
### THE PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

The Public Health Approach demonstrates that problems can arise when a **host** (the individual or person using substances) interacts with an **agent** (e.g., the substance, like alcohol or drugs) in an **environment** (the social and physical context in which substance use does or does not occur).



**Root causes**, also known as risk and protective factors or intervening variables, are those conditions in the community, family, peer group, and school that make it more or less likely a person will use substances. In another area, consider the root causes for heart disease. A poor diet is not the only cause of heart attacks, but we know that a poor diet can significantly increase the likelihood you might have a heart attack. Eating healthy foods and exercising are examples of protective factors that can decrease the likelihood of future heart disease. Figure 1 identifies key root causes for underage drinking. (Note: these root causes are discussed in detail in Chapter 2: Collect Needs and Resource Data.)

**Figure 1**



**Community coalitions** are oftentimes one of the only groups in a community that are organized to address the entire community environment in which young people may use alcohol, tobacco, and other substances. Many organizations and individuals can impact the individual and address specific aspects of the environment, but the coalition is the only group that is looking COMPREHENSIVELY at the environment seeking to achieve population-level changes to the entire community.

Approaches that target individual users can reach limited numbers of people. Community-based programs that provide direct services to individuals are important partners in a comprehensive community-level response to substance use. Strategies that focus on the availability of the substance and the entire community environment—although more difficult to implement—are likely to impact many more people. For example, information learned by teenagers who attend alcohol prevention classes at school. While important, these **individual-focus strategies** are limited to those students enrolled in the classes.



Chances of keeping youth from using alcohol are greater if those classes are part of a comprehensive strategy that also includes local ordinances that limit billboards and other advertising near local schools, and community-wide policies that mandate responsible beverage service training as part of the alcohol licensing process. These strategies, coupled with increased funding for compliance checks and increased fines for violations to ensure that alcohol retailers do not sell to minors, will have even greater impact. Such **environmental-focus strategies** target the substance (e.g., the availability of alcohol) and the environment (e.g., implementing policies to reduce youth access). The **role of the coalition** is to identify or coordinate the implementation of these comprehensive strategies.

## SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework

The DFC initiative utilizes the **Strategic Prevention Framework** (SPF) developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The SPF's seven elements guide coalitions in developing the infrastructure needed for community-based public health approaches leading to effective and sustainable reductions in substance use.

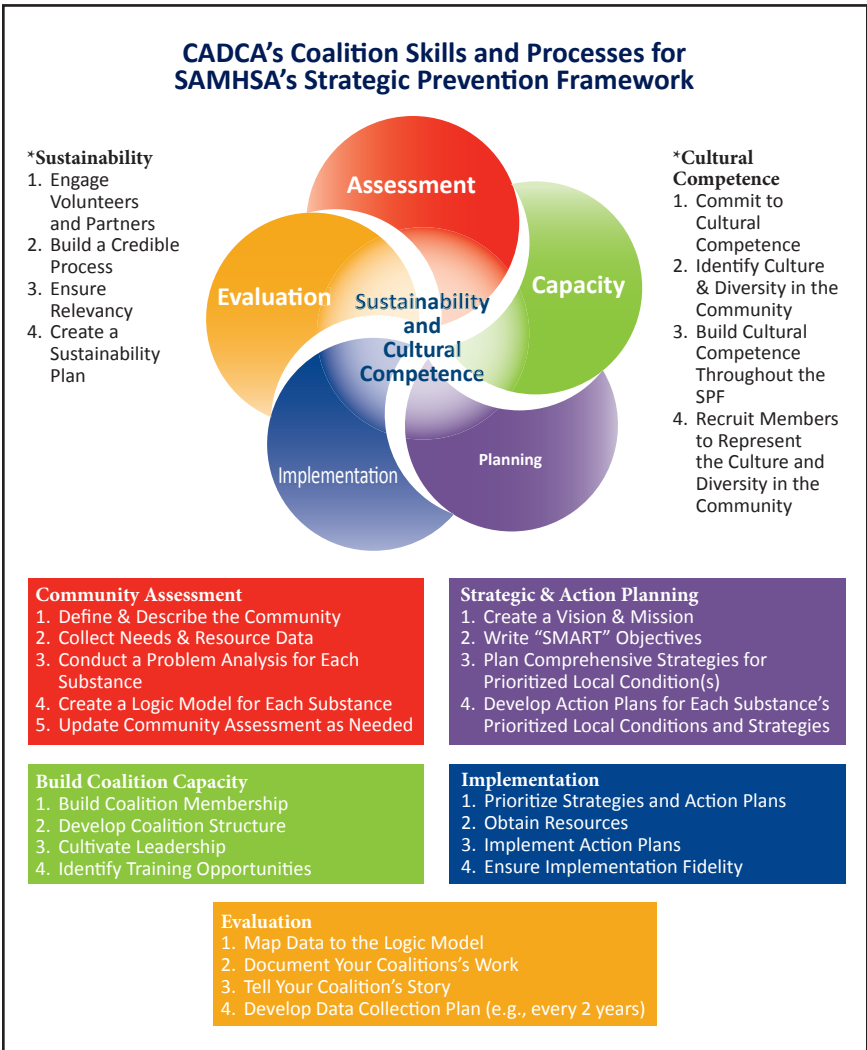
The elements shown in Figure 2 include:

- **Assessment.** Collect data to define problems, resources, and readiness within a geographic area to address needs and gaps.
- **Capacity.** Mobilize and/or build capacity within a geographic area to address needs.
- **Planning.** Develop a comprehensive strategic plan that includes policies, programs, and practices creating a logical, data-driven plan to address problems identified in the assessment.
- **Implementation.** Implement evidence-based prevention programs, policies, and practices.
- **Evaluation.** Measure the impact of the SPF and its implemented programs, policies, and practices.
- **Cultural Competence.** Interact with and effectively engage members of diverse populations.
- **Sustainability.** Achieve and maintain long-term results.

To be successful, coalition leaders and members need to implement each of these elements in their community. Fortunately, all the skills and knowledge do not need to reside in any one individual, but in the coalition members’ collective repertoire of skills and knowledge.

Figure 2 displays the key skills and processes that CADCA has identified as essential for a coalition to be successful. The *CADCA Primer Series* describes each of the SPF elements in detail.

**Figure 2**



## Building Partnerships for Prevention

So why is it important to develop a coalition? The old saying “two heads are better than one” applies. Coalitions made up of a cross-section of community members bring diverse perspectives and expertise. They can also help develop a strong group IQ for identifying problems, analyzing data, and developing relevant, culturally appropriate approaches and strategies. Coalitions should include a representative mix of the community, including parents, teachers, youth, law enforcement, health care, media, community leaders, religious and fraternal organizations, child welfare organizations, substance use treatment and prevention providers, and others who reflect the community’s diversity—racially, culturally, and linguistically. DFC coalitions are required to include at least 12 prescribed community sectors in their coalitions.

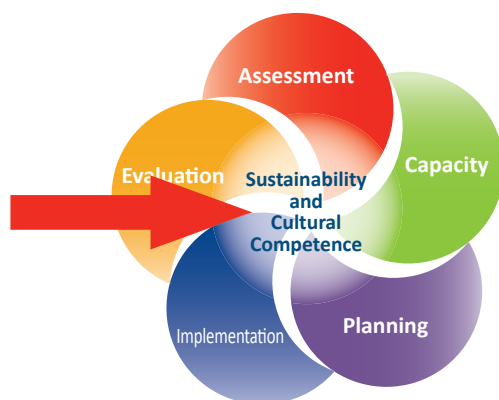
Involving individuals and groups (sectors) who have access to and understand the community not only builds coalition capacity, but also increases support for planning, implementation, and sustainability.

The basic idea about coalitions is that “working together can move us forward.” That said, collaboration among diverse systems and community members brings numerous challenges, including turf issues, differing personalities, group dynamics, power imbalances, and cultural differences. The sooner these issues are addressed, preferably with the help of a good facilitator, the sooner the coalition will be in a position to begin to collaborate effectively. (More information on building your coalition’s capacity and developing leadership is available in the Institute’s *Capacity Primer*, available online at [www.cadca.org/resources](http://www.cadca.org/resources).

## A Word About Sustainability as it Relates to Cultural Competence

Sustaining initiatives to bring about population-level changes in substance use rates requires a strong coalition that can unite all sectors of a community. Starting to work on sustainability without involving diverse cultural elements of your community can lead to serious problems. Many funders will want your coalition to clearly demonstrate that it has the commitment and participation of diverse sectors of your population, especially those acutely affected by substance use.

Sustaining a coalition over time also requires a combination of diverse internal and external nonfinancial resources. Necessary internal resources include sound leadership, committed and well-trained partners and members, and strong administrative and financial management systems. Critical external resources include public and key stakeholders and the engagement of community-based organizations, parents, and other residents that represent the cultural diversity of the community.



## Cultural Competence Overview

This primer focuses on the process that the Institute suggests community coalitions use to incorporate cultural competence as they work through the elements of the SPF. SAMHSA lists cultural competence as a cross-cutting aspect of the SPF. Likewise, we believe that cultural competence affects all aspects of coalition building and must be considered in every element of the Strategic Prevention Framework.

Although cultural competence affects all elements of the

SPF, coalitions should emphasize it when developing capacity. Individuals and organizations can take the opportunity to increase their cultural competence, as the skills and knowledge required can be learned and implemented in a reasonable period of time.

We encourage your coalition to *think* comprehensively, even if it cannot *act* comprehensively at the moment. Maintain a strong focus on your community and its needs and avoid “borrowing” another group’s cultural competence plan and using it as your own. You can incorporate ideas and concepts from others to jump-start your own efforts, but you should custom design a plan that matches your community’s unique characteristics.

This primer is divided into four chapters that allow a coalition to think comprehensively about cultural competence:

**Chapter 1:** Commit to Cultural Competence

**Chapter 2:** Identify Culture and Diversity in the Community

**Chapter 3:** Build Cultural Competence Throughout the SPF

**Chapter 4:** Recruiting Members to Represent the Diversity and Culture in Your Community



## ***What Defines Culture?***

The most commonly cited aspects of culture are the most visible: language, music, and food. Anthropologists and other social scientists study additional qualities that help us develop a deeper understanding of culture—the shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, folklore, and institutions of people unified by race, ethnicity, language, nationality, religion, or other factors. For example, culture affects people’s perceptions about alcohol use, misuse, and related problems.

Culture pervades all aspects of identity—whether individual or group. Coalitions must first understand a culture before attempting to alter systems, policies, or group norms. And they need to recognize that an individual can identify with multiple groups. Diversity encompasses much more than racial or ethnic identification. Researchers have identified the following factors, which may be present in any number of combinations:

- National origin
- Education
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Language
- Hobbies/interests
- Health status
- Housing situations
- Immigrant/refugee status
- Employment status
- Location (rural, urban, suburban)
- Socioeconomic status
- Age
- Occupation
- Literacy
- People with disabilities
- Gender identification
- Family structure
- Substance misuse/mental health status
- Health status/conditions

## ***What is Cultural Competence?***

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines cultural competence as:

“A set of behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency, or program, or among individuals, enabling them to function effectively in diverse cultural interactions and similarities within, among, and between groups.”

Other experts view cultural competence as a point on a continuum representing the policies and practices of an organization, or the values and behaviors of an individual, which enable that organization or individual to interact effectively in a culturally diverse environment. When coalitions incorporate cultural competence into their work, they:

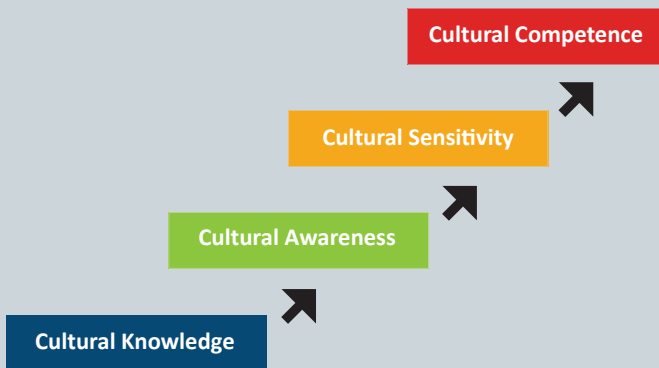
- Invest time and resources in training staff and volunteers in cultural competence.

- Carefully examine their structure, practices, and policies to ensure that these elements truly facilitate effective cultural interactions.
- Display respect for differences among cultural groups.
- Expand cultural knowledge and pay attention to the dynamics of culture.
- Solicit advice from diverse communities regarding activities.
- Hire employees who respect unique aspects of varied cultures.

### Understanding Culture is a Process

Fostering cultural competence in organizations and individuals involves the following process of building:

- 1. Cultural knowledge**—Knowledge of some cultural characteristics, history, values, beliefs and behaviors of a different group
- 2. Cultural awareness**—Openness to the idea of changing cultural attitudes
- 3. Cultural sensitivity**—Knowledge of cultural differences without assigning values to the differences
- 4. Cultural competence**—Ability to bring together different behaviors, attitudes, and policies and work effectively in cross-cultural settings to produce better results



### What Defines a Culturally Competent Coalition?

**Effective coalitions** recognize the need to include a broad cross-section of the population in their work and prioritize including organizations that represent various cultural groups. They know, for example, that they must focus on young people as one target of prevention efforts, but also make a place for youth at the coalition table. They understand that different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups need viable roles in the coalition to help determine and support substance use prevention strategies. **In short, effective coalitions make a concerted effort to ensure that cultural competence permeates all aspects of their work.**

Coalition leaders readily acknowledge that working with diverse cultural groups is necessary, incredibly rewarding, and often difficult. Efforts to bridge cultures and encourage community-wide participation often run counter to prevailing sentiments. At times, residents blame substance use problems on particular cultural groups, youth, or people from certain neighborhoods. Some people do not readily trust what they consider the dominant culture or government institutions. Others feel isolated by language, low socio-economic status, or the frustration of trying to be understood.

In short, substance use is a tough issue. It crosses all racial and economic lines and disproportionately affects certain populations. The coalition can help foster community reconciliation. For example, coalitions can bring together a range of organizations and agencies to create a positive environment for reintegrating former prisoners. Research indicates that this approach is critical to successful, sustainable outcomes. Re-entry implementation is easier through a coordinated effort.

It is important to acknowledge that some coalition members may see solutions in terms of decreasing racism and poverty, while others will consider solutions in terms of getting people into long-term recovery. There is a place at the table for all, but the coalition needs to have a clearly articulated logic model so members and supporters will understand what success will look like in measurable terms, both short- and long-term.

Despite these and many other challenges, coalitions across the country actively serve as catalysts for better understanding and collective work that is inclusive of all cultural groups. They gain vital community support through their efforts to include, validate, and respect diverse populations in the common goal of healthier communities, free of substance misuse. Effective coalitions recognize and honor the strengths and resources inherent in diverse groups.

### ***The Need for Cultural Competence***

Because achieving cultural competence requires time and effort, your coalition must demonstrate how achieving it helps contribute to reducing substance use rates. The following are reasons commonly cited for devoting resources to cultural competence:

- **Rapidly changing demographics.** The U.S. Census indicates the country is undergoing rapid demographic change. Significant numbers of immigrants are settling in traditional and new communities. Far fewer culturally homogeneous communities exist now than in past decades.
- **The widespread reach of substance use.** The negative consequences of substance use affect all segments of society, regardless of income, gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, etc. It is not enough to

reduce rates in one segment of a community; a comprehensive approach is necessary to target all demographic groups.

- **The value of group strengths and protective factors.** Research demonstrates that each group has strengths and protective factors that can buffer the negative effects of substance use. Communities must identify, strengthen, and include these factors in their strategies to reduce substance use rates.
- **The value of group representation.** The coalition table must reflect the diversity of the community. Residents want to see respected individuals who understand their needs occupying leadership roles. Otherwise, your coalition will not gain widespread community buy-in.

### Aim for a Custom Fit

The Institute aims to develop effective coalitions. We do not believe in a “one size fits all” model. However, we recognize that while coalitions will differ in many aspects, all can share a core approach. Successful coalitions will take the key concepts of cultural competence and modify them to custom-fit their communities—making an adjustment here, placing more emphasis there, and adapting essential ideas to local practice.

Coalitions must embody certain qualities that create an atmosphere that encourages cultural competence in individuals and member organizations. Some of the guiding principles of cultural competence that your coalition may incorporate include the following:

**Culture: first, last and always.** Culture has an impact on how a person thinks, believes, and acts. Acknowledge culture as a predominant and effective force in shaping behaviors, values, and institutions.

**One goal— many roads.** Each group has something to share. Acknowledge that several paths can lead to the same goal.

**Diversity within diversity.** Recognize the internal diversity and complexity of cultural groups. Remember that one individual cannot speak for all.

**People are unique.** Acknowledge people’s group and personal identities and treat people as individuals.

**Viewpoint shift.** The dominant culture serves the community with varying degrees of success. Acknowledge that what works well for the dominant group may not serve members of other cultural groups. Try viewing issues from alternative viewpoints.



## Overarching Principles of Cultural Competence

Individuals who work in various areas of substance use prevention served on the SAMHSA Center for Substance Abuse Prevention’s Racial and Ethnic Specific Knowledge Exchange and Dissemination Project committee, which drafted the following overarching principles that define cultural competence:

- **Ensure** community involvement at all levels.
- **Use** population-based definitions of community (let the community define itself).
- **Stress** the importance of relevant, culturally appropriate approaches.
- **Support** the development of culturally specific services.
- **Adhere** to Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.
- **Use** culturally relevant outcomes and indicators.
- **Employ** culturally competent evaluators.
- **Engage** in asset mapping—identify resources and start from this point.
- **Promote** organizational cultural competence—staff should reflect the community it serves.
- **Allow** the use of indigenous knowledge in the body of “evidence-based” research.
- **Include** target population(s) (e.g., youth, consumers, participants, elders).



# CHAPTER 1.

## Commit to Cultural Competence

Community work is bigger than any one organization or group. At its best, it transcends organizational boundaries and encompasses all members and groups, including diverse populations within a community. For such collective work, members of all community sectors must realize that what happens in one part of town affects everyone. This perspective focuses, justifiably, on the interconnectedness of problems and issues. Successful coalitions practice self-determination and democratic principles. They recognize that it is never acceptable for one group or individual to impose its solutions to problems on another.

As cultural issues affect all aspects of coalition development and operations, your group should address cultural competence on multiple levels: in your community interactions, within your partnerships, within the host organization (if applicable), and so on. Effective collaborations highlight cultural issues and integrate them as core aspects of building community-wide support. Working through the elements of the SPF before inviting members of diverse communities to the coalition table is a mistake and will likely offend the people you need to include.

### Considerations for Becoming a Culturally Competent Coalition

To transform a focus on cultural competence into effective action, coalitions need to take steps to ensure broad support of the concept. The following are examples of some things your coalition should consider:

- **Write it down.** Make including diverse populations part of your mission and vision statements. Incorporate these concepts into your logic model, strategic plan, and action plan.
- **Commit from the top.** Coalition governance should officially commit to enhancing its cultural competence as it works to reduce substance use.
- **Do not assign and forget.** Do not delegate work on cultural issues to one individual or department. Focus and responsibility must remain with the entire coalition.
- **Expand outreach efforts.** Your coalition encourages outreach to diverse groups, makes outreach part of your strategic plan, and assigns responsibilities to coalition members to conduct the outreach.
- **Use inclusive language.** You use inclusive language when referring to groups in your community (“we” and “our community” rather than “those

people” or “those kids”). Coalition members and staff demonstrate an understanding of cross-cultural concepts.

- **Commit leadership.** Your coalition leaders support cultural competence and demonstrate commitment to the concept.
- **Promote training and development.** Your coalition provides or facilitates cultural competence training for community and coalition members, staff, and volunteers.
- **Share responsibility and accountability.** Coalition and community members, staff, and volunteers work together and share responsibility for developing effective strategies inclusive of all demographic groups.

### Action Steps Toward Achieving Cultural Competence

1. **Develop support for change throughout the organization (who wants change and who does not?).** Is this a top-down mandate? How deep is the “buy-in?” Do you need a committee to work on this issue?
2. **Identify the cultural groups to be involved.** Who needs to be involved in the planning, implementation, and reinforcement of the change?
3. **Identify barriers to cultural competence at work in your organization.** What is not working? What will slow you down or stop you?
4. **Assess your current level of cultural competence.** What knowledge, skills, and resources can you build on? Where are the gaps?
5. **Identify the resources needed.** How much funding is required to bring about the changes? Where can you find the resources?
6. **Develop goals and implementation steps and deadlines for achieving them.**
7. **Commit to an ongoing evaluation of progress (measuring outcomes) and be willing to make adjustments to achieve the desired goals.** What will success look like? How do you know you are on the right track?

### Cultural Competence Checklist

The **cultural competence checklist** is a way for the coalition, individuals, and organizations to identify ways they can foster cultural competence when working with specific diverse populations.

To complete the checklist, identify a specific population in your community that your coalition seeks to engage in either capacity building or planning specific strategies. The coalition can then answer each question for that specific culture.

The checklist was adopted from *Getting to Outcomes*, Volume 1. SAMHSA, CSAP, NCAP, June 2000.



## Cultural Competence Checklist

Use the following checklist to ensure that important issues are addressed for each cultural group identified in the community.

Culture to be addressed: \_\_\_\_\_

Issue	Is the issue adequately addressed? Yes/No	How do you/will you address this issue?
Are coalition members and staff representative of the target population?		
Are the published materials and curricula relevant to the target population?		
Have the curricula and materials been examined by experts or target population members?		
Has the coalition taken into account the target population's language, cultural context, and socioeconomic status in designing its materials and plans?		
Has the program developed a culturally appropriate outreach action plan?		
Are activities and decision-making designed to be inclusive?		
Are meetings and activities scheduled to be convenient and accessible to the target population?		
Are the gains and rewards for participation in your program clearly stated?		
Have coalition members and staff been trained to be culturally sensitive in their interactions with the target population?		

Adapted from: Getting to Outcomes, Volume 1. SAMHSA, CSAP, NCAP, June 2000.



## CHAPTER 2.

# Identify Culture and Diversity in the Community

As noted earlier, the first two elements of the “process” to becoming culturally competent involve increasing cultural “knowledge” and “awareness” of diverse cultural groups. A prime opportunity to learn about different diverse cultures in the community is when the coalition conducts its community assessment. The community description provides a great place to start the identification of the culture and diversity of your community.

### Describing the Community Demographics

As discussed in the *Assessment Primer*, the effort to develop a complete community description includes the gathering of basic demographic data that define your community. Factors to consider include variables like size, population, ethnic or racial groups, economic status, primary language, and so on. You can get this information from the most recent U.S. Census.

Coalition leaders often find that data from national or state sources, usually presented in aggregate form, provides an overly broad picture of their community and its substance use problems. Similarly, state or federal-level data is often too general to adequately define a community’s specific concerns or needs.

Whenever possible, aim for data sorted by gender, age, race and/or ethnicity, so you can determine which groups are more affected by substance use problems. However, if you can only amass aggregate data, your coalition may need to disaggregate it— that is, divide it into constituent parts—to help you better understand the dimensions of the problem.

Your group might turn to a city or county planning department, economic development office, tribal council, or chamber of commerce for more precise data. In describing your community, your group also must consider cultural heterogeneity, assimilation and acculturation, and hidden communities. When reviewing the demographic data, three important factors must be considered: cultural heterogeneity, assimilation, and hidden factors.

### **Cultural Heterogeneity**

While many large population groups such as Asian Americans, Native Americans, or Hispanics possess many similarities, they also differ by national origin, language, tribe, geography, and culture. For example, the traditional approach to studying the extremely diverse Asian American population as a homogeneous

group hides important intergroup differences. Likewise, the Hispanic population of the United States includes a number of nationality groups that vary from each other and have different rates of alcohol and substance misuse. Consequently, simply saying “substance use among Asian American or Hispanic youth” will not be sufficient for identifying the unique cultural diversity of your community. Acknowledging these disparities by disaggregating data can help your coalition avoid a culturally insensitive approach.

### ***Acculturation and Assimilation***

Immigrant groups bring traditional cultural values, such as strong family ties, which have served for generations as protective factors. Acculturation and assimilation tend to decrease the strength of these cultural values and, with them, their protective value. This phenomenon is particularly seen among youth, who tend to adapt more readily to a new culture. For example, research shows that among Hispanic/Latino immigrants, more men than women consume alcohol. However, within two generations a cultural shift occurs and the consumption rates between the genders tend to equalize.

### ***Hidden Communities***

For a variety of reasons, some groups prefer to maintain a low profile and finding good data about them may be difficult. For example, individuals who have learned to fear negative consequences as a result of their sexual orientation often shun contact with government agencies and have been historically undercounted. Coalitions may find it challenging to identify these hidden communities, but should make every effort to reach out to them.

One source of data that you might investigate is [www.diversitydata.org](http://www.diversitydata.org), a project of Brandeis University, The Heller School For Social Policy and Management. The website incorporates data on a diverse range of social measures that may be helpful to your coalition.

## **Learning About Cultures**

A quote from Steven Covey’s *“7 Habits of Highly Effective People”* states, “seek first to understand, then to be understood.” This applies when coalition members are meeting with people and organizations from different cultures. Consider the following questions to ask when finding out about their culture:

### **Concrete Expressions**

1. What are typical foods served in the culture?
2. Are there any typical styles of dress?
3. What do people do for recreation?

4. Do buildings have identifiable features?
5. How is public space used? For example, do people tend to “hang out” on the street, or are they in public because they are going from one place to the next?

### **Recognized Behaviors**

1. How do people greet one another?
2. Describe how a holiday is celebrated.
3. How would a visitor be welcomed to someone’s home?
4. What are the norms around weddings? Births? Deaths?

### **Explicit Beliefs**

1. How important is hierarchy?
2. How are gender roles perceived?
3. How do people view obligations toward one another?
4. What personal activities are seen as public? What activities are seen as private?
5. What are the cultural attitudes toward aging and the elderly?

### **Deeply Embedded Beliefs**

1. How important is the individual in the culture? How important is the group?
2. How is space used? (e.g., how close should two people who are social acquaintances stand next to one another when they are having a conversation?)
3. How is time understood and measured? (e.g., how late can you be to a business appointment before you are considered rude?)
4. Is change considered positive or negative?
5. What is the criteria for individual success?
6. What is the relationship between humans and nature? (e.g., do humans dominate nature? does nature dominate humans? do the two live in harmony?)
7. How is divine power viewed in relation to human effort?
8. Is the culture a high-context or low-context one?
9. What is humorous?

10. How do individuals “know” things? (e.g., are people encouraged to question things? are they encouraged to master accepted wisdom?)
11. Are people encouraged to be more action-oriented or to be more contemplative?
12. What is the role of luck in people’s lives?

Source: <https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/global-studies-and-languages/21g-019-communicating-across-cultures-spring-2005/>

## CHAPTER 3. Build Cultural Competence Throughout the SPF

As noted earlier, cultural competence should never be an afterthought or something to worry about after your coalition has been formed and has developed activities. Addressing issues of diversity and cultural competence from the coalition's inception increases the likelihood of establishing a firm foundation to build on in later years.

We will use the SPF as the basis for a discussion of how to incorporate cultural competence into your efforts to develop population-level approaches to substance use. In this chapter, we will take a closer look at how the first element—assessment—relates to your coalition. Note that we present substantial information on the assessment and capacity-building elements of the SPF. Simply stated, you should incorporate key concepts of cultural competence from the very beginning. If in your initial coalition meeting, you look around the room and see that significant groups are not present, take immediate steps to change that situation. Your credibility—indeed, the success of your entire effort—may hang in the balance.

As you work through the elements, you will notice that each encompasses a kind of mini-SPF—that is, each element includes a certain amount of assessment, capacity building, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Your coalition might start to feel as if it is doing the same thing over and over. That is a natural part of the process, because as you get into the work, you will start to see areas that you need to revisit, generate more data for or fine-tune.





## Assessment

A community assessment is a comprehensive description of your target community. It involves systematically gathering and analyzing community data to identify and address local substance use problems. Cultural issues affect aspects of a community assessment, highlighting the need for cultural competence when you begin to assess the problems in your community.

### Data Collection Tips

To ensure a culturally appropriate and responsive data collection process, follow these guidelines:

- **Data collectors should be diverse.** They should reflect the makeup of your community.
- **Edit data collection questions.** Be sure your questions are not potentially too personal or offensive.
- **Make sure you are understood.** Employ competent translators, interviewers, or group facilitators who mirror the community.
- **Use focus groups.** A skilled moderator can help you unearth information you will not get from a broad survey.
- **Listen to local experts.** Invite community experts to share their thoughts with coalition members.
- **Be sensitive to group norms.** Learn what is and what is not acceptable to your target group. Which actions or words cause alarm; which open doors?
- **Be alert to group concerns.** Some groups may feel quite vulnerable or defensive about discussing substance use with people they consider outsiders.
- **Conduct key informant interviews.** In one-on-one interviews, a skilled interviewer can gather insights to flesh out your quantitative data.
- **Host a town hall meeting.** Work with partners from different cultural groups to host town hall meetings in a variety of community settings. Employ a skilled moderator (and translators if needed) to focus participants on generating information to decrease substance use.

The community **resource assessment** should include a list of key institutions that serve diverse populations and describe their role in reducing substance use rates. Incorporate organizations with direct, historic links to their populations. Black churches, for instance, have long served as both places of worship and social and health service providers to African Americans. Community centers, such as those run by Filipino Americans in some parts of the United States, help keep cultural traditions alive. These community-based entities and other grassroots organizations provide access to local expertise and knowledge that are invaluable in community mobilization efforts.

## Capacity Building

Capacity building is the process of developing the human resources your coalition needs to achieve its aim. True capacity development involves finding people in your community who are ready, willing, and able to contribute.

## ***Building Your Coalition***

To ensure success, you will want to create a well-balanced mix of member stakeholders and community representatives. Remember, to the extent possible, your coalition should mirror your community. The following guidelines will help you in this task:

- **Create** a formal plan for seeking coalition candidates. Review who is at the table and identify gaps to fill.
- **Define** the skills, knowledge, and resources coalition members need to implement your community plan effectively.
- **Plan** to recruit candidates for your coalition from both formal and informal sources.
- **Look** for leaders with strong ties to the community.
- **Create** a “job description” for coalition members outlining their responsibilities and level of commitment. Remember that you want coalition members who will actively work to bring about change, not just come to meetings, eat, and listen to staff reports.
- **Avoid** recruiting “one of each type” of individual from your community. This approach can feel like a symbolic effort lacking genuine concern.
- **Recruit** members face-to-face. This method gives you the opportunity to assess interest, skills, and competence levels, and describe the level of involvement you seek.
- **Share** a compelling description of what your coalition wants to accomplish and why participation can contribute to your success.

### **Skill Building is Key**

When focusing on skills your coalition may need to build, consider this quote from the University of Kansas Community Tool Box: “Organizations have a ‘culture’ of policies, procedures, programs, and processes, and incorporate certain values, beliefs, assumptions and customs. An organizational culture may not lend itself to cultural competence, so that’s where skill building comes in.”

Recognize that not everyone in the community can or should be a full-fledged coalition participant. You can manage this resource gap by establishing relations with organizations and institutions that represent diverse populations. Schedule a visit to explain the purpose of your coalition and to determine other ways that these organizations might be of assistance.

## ***Managing Your Coalition***

Coalitions, by their nature, are always evolving. Some members will come and go. However, basic management and ongoing recruitment techniques will help keep core members focused and on track.

**Match members to outreach efforts.** Coalition leaders should consider member skills and attributes such as established relations with the community, language skills, business contacts, and faith. For example, you might ask a person who is “faith friendly” to reach out to local congregations.

**Acknowledge barriers to full community participation.** Community members might not be able or might not want to participate in your coalition. Consider why certain groups or individuals cannot participate and, if appropriate, determine whether your coalition and the reluctant party can mutually work around the barrier. For example, if you wish to have genuine youth involvement, holding meetings during school hours will be a barrier.

However, recognize that some community members cannot be brought into the process. Whatever the reason—trust issues, turf issues—your coalition should respect them. Continue to provide information to these groups and individuals, because they may change their minds at a later date.

**Develop leaders.** Many groups lose their community leaders when they immigrate to this country. Other groups may be isolated from traditional leaders. Therefore, your coalition should develop a plan for leadership development and commit resources for leadership training and conference attendance. When seeking the established leaders in your community, consider the term “leader” from the community’s point of view. A community leader might be a member of the town council, but could just as easily be “the lady in the corner house” that everyone knows and trusts. Indeed, the term “leader” includes all of the following and more:

- Heads of institutions or organizations
- Elected or appointed officials
- Those who oversee sweat lodge rituals
- Those who oversee ceremonial rituals
- Heads of tribal councils
- Elders
- Residents with extensive social family networks
- Youth

### Teen Leaders: Unique Challenges

Teens often express reluctance to join a coalition of adults because they feel they will not be respected or listened to. One way to address this issue is to provide leadership training to youth.

The CADCA Institute's Youth Leadership Initiative is one program that can be helpful in developing young leaders. Another successful strategy is to create a youth council. Youth leaders, meeting separately and making recommendations to the coalition's board.

To learn more, visit the CADCA website: [www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org).

## Planning

### **“Coalitions don’t plan to fail, they fail to plan.”**

Community leaders need to pay considerable attention to the planning process as they initiate efforts to build an effective coalition. They should design a process that embodies the concept that strong participation of all segments of the community will be a key determinant of the success of their efforts to reduce substance use. Research shows that truly effective coalitions engage residents and partners and thus develop more resources and achieve greater results. Active involvement in the planning process can empower communities as coalitions reach out to all residents and welcome them as participants in efforts to address their problems.

While no one model planning process exists, coalitions should keep several key principles in mind. First, the process should be *open* to all who wish to participate. The planning process can be of singular importance in building a broad base of community support, and the people who participate in it support the coalition over the long haul. This does not mean that large numbers of people need to be involved in all aspects of the development of a community plan, but there should be points at which they can provide input and help build consensus.

Your planning process constitutes a significant opportunity to reach out to potential members. So to be truly inclusive and diverse, the process should involve a large number of community sectors. For example, participation in the planning process can provide your coalition with great ideas, help get youth buy-in, and give the coalition credibility in the community. For a variety of reasons, you may not be able to get representatives from diverse cultural groups involved in your planning process. You may need to reach out to those groups and invite them to the table.

Your plan should include a logical sequence of strategies and steps that lead to the reduction of substance use in your community. A well-constructed plan

includes development of an evaluation process at the start of your project (rather than at the end). In addition, a good plan:

- **Allows** you to wisely allocate current dollars and resources and secure future funding.
- **Defines** “success” in measurable terms.
- **Helps** you select interventions targeted to root causes of substance use in your community.
- **Assigns** accountability and timetables.
- **Emphasizes** cultural competence at every stage—involving community members at the coalition table for assessment, capacity building, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Creating a workable plan of action is challenging for any entity. For an organization that also strives to be culturally competent, it may be necessary to modify the planning process to reflect the target community. Coalitions should be open to planning and thinking that more closely aligns itself with traditions of various community groups. For example, American Indians often prefer planning processes that are circular and reflect their respect for the sacred circle. Faith-based organizations may believe action-oriented plans are secondary to the understanding of doctrine or sacred texts. Listening to and incorporating different viewpoints results in a plan that is culturally competent and therefore more likely to succeed.

Regardless of the approach or approaches you take, most coalition members will come to the table with different levels of understanding of substance use and the basic planning process. When most members start from more or less the same place, you will have a setting that generates fruitful discourse and consensus building.

### **Example: Developing Logic Models**

Many people may not be familiar with the inner workings of effective logic models. You might need to conduct several sessions to get everyone to a baseline of understanding. Coalition members may need time to work out any disconnects between a formal logic model process and their own approaches. Ideally, you will not start work on a logic model until all coalition members understand and are comfortable with the process.

Cultural competence in a coalition does not just happen. You need to take concrete, coherent steps to ensure that you are on the right path. If you apply for federal grants such as the DFC, you will be required to demonstrate the inclusion of diverse groups in your coalition. Cultural competence and diversity issues should be interwoven in an explicit manner throughout.

### **Example: Youth Engagement**

If the aim of your logic model is to reduce substance use among youth, the coalition can outline the steps needed to have youth from diverse backgrounds as full participants in your coalition. Make youth the subject of involvement in planning rather than the object of your activities.

It is surprising that many coalitions develop detailed plans for everything except how to become more culturally competent. As noted above, a cultural competence plan is one method of assessing whether you are on the right track. Such a plan should have measurable goals and objectives with concrete timelines.

### **Example: Recruiting**

A coalition might develop an outreach goal of recruiting (up to) 10 new members to become involved in the coalition's work. The coalition's recruiting plan can involve contacting and meeting with the different community organizations representing diverse populations in the community such as churches, synagogues, mosques, community centers, language institutes, athletic organizations, etc.

A cultural competence plan should also indicate who is responsible for the proposed action and outline some of the potential resources needed. The entire coalition should periodically review the cultural competence plan.

Note that a cultural competence planning process may reveal several areas of discord among coalition members. Such differences are better dealt with early in the formation of the coalition; if not, they may resurface later to derail the coalition's work.

## **Implementation**

Community coalitions should select and implement strategies that will produce community-wide changes in substance use rates. Remember that while substance use affects entire communities, its causes, impacts, and manifestations may differ significantly in diverse neighborhoods. For example, you may find that some areas of your community have a number of high-risk environments. You must tailor your approaches to address the unique problems of each locale and involve residents in crafting and carrying out solutions.

To select or develop an effective intervention, it is worthwhile to understand the basic components and elements generally present in successful community interventions. (These interventions are fully outlined in the Institute's *Implementation Primer*.) Research indicates seven essential strategies for achieving community change. We have included example interventions with each of the seven strategies.

- 1. Providing information** — Ensure that printed materials (brochures, flyers, etc.) consider the community's linguistic differences, average reading level, and how different groups are portrayed in the materials. Then determine how to distribute the materials to reach the largest number of community members. Translate materials into languages used widely in your community. Disseminate publications and advertising through non-mainstream media and through a variety of channels (i.e., church bulletins, cultural organization newsletters, etc.).
- 2. Enhancing skills** — Develop an educational plan for employees, coalition members, and volunteers to improve competencies required for effective cross-cultural work. Select and pay for coalition members to attend training.
- 3. Providing support** — Review your coalition's policies and practices and confirm that your mission, vision, and goals align with and are served by a diverse membership and inclusive practices. Provide child care during coalition meetings and hold meetings in the evenings when the majority of members are not at school or work.
- 4. Enhancing access/reducing barriers** — Engage local hospitals and treatment centers and collaborate to provide low-cost or free substance use treatment for low-income, uninsured individuals.
- 5. Changing consequences (incentives/disincentives)** — Establish a teen court for youth involved in minor substance use or possession offenses.
- 6. Physical design** — Work to place alcohol and tobacco products in areas of retail outlets not accessible to youth.
- 7. Modifying/changing policies** — Advocate for a policy to eliminate advertising of alcohol products near places of worship.

Choosing several of these strategies—with particular emphasis on approaches four through seven, referred to as environmental and systems changes—ranks high among the most important decisions your coalition will make. The methods selected must correspond to the problems identified in your logic model. After selecting one or more activities related to a particular strategy, your coalition should consider the following issues:

- Do you have broad-based support for the intervention?
- Has the intervention been successfully attempted with other diverse populations?
- Will the coalition be able to promote ownership of the intervention?
- Is it doable?

Most challenging to attain are changes in policies, environments, barriers, or consequences. Because these types of changes have a wide impact, your coalition will need to mobilize broad sections of the community.

Your coalition members may want to consider selecting an existing model program and fine-tuning it to meet your community's needs. To help you determine if the program is appropriate for your community, consider the following questions:

- **Who** conducted the research and program development? How knowledgeable were they in working with diverse populations?
- **What** populations were involved in the research study? How effective will the program be if the study did not include the populations with which you work?
- **Has** the original research and program been repeated with diverse populations effectively?
- **Who** evaluated the program? Was it the program developer? Was there an independent review? Were representatives of diverse groups included on the evaluation team?
- **Are** the materials available in other languages? Do you have the resources to get necessary translations?
- **Are** translations available? Who did the translations? Were the translations tested in a target population and found effective?
- **Was** cultural competence integrated into the design of the program? If so, how?
- **Will** the program developer or local experts work with your coalition on the adaptation?
- **Have** you created a way to involve the community in the adaptation?

In most cases, you will need to adapt the model program to meet the needs of your diverse community—not necessarily an easy process, but an important process for achieving success.

## Evaluation

To evaluate your program, your coalition will collect, analyze, and interpret information on its implementation, impact, and effectiveness. Evaluation should tell the story of your coalition's work—what it did to try to change the community for the better, and how effective it was at achieving change.

An evaluation plan is like a trip itinerary. It should:

- **State** clearly where you are going.
- **Describe** how you will get there.



- **Describe** success in measurable terms (your destination).
- **Allow** your group to check short-term outcomes in measurable terms and make adjustments if necessary.

At one time, an evaluator—typically a researcher from a university—would observe coalition efforts from a detached perspective and produce a report. Today’s evaluator, however, also acts as a facilitator who helps organizations identify and improve the skills they need for success. Consequently, most evaluations now engage coalition members in the process of formulating, conducting, interpreting, and using the findings of the evaluation. This approach improves communication, involves community representatives and stakeholders at each stage of evaluation, and results in a more well-informed analysis of the project.

### ***Data Collection in Evaluation and Selection of an Evaluator***

Your evaluation strategy is incomplete without baseline information and a complete data collection plan. You need good data sources to interpret events in your community, and sometimes primary data sources produce information that is too broad. To put some meat on the bones of a broader survey, your coalition may need to create questionnaires, conduct key informant interviews, or set up focus groups at the local level. Keep cultural competence at the forefront of this process. Ask your key constituents which data-gathering methods will resonate in a positive way with your target population. Which data-gathering methods will this sub-population view with suspicion or alarm?

You will also want cultural competence to guide your selection of an evaluator or evaluation team. Get your community involved in the search and selection process; solicit their insights and local knowledge. When reviewing the qualifications for evaluation candidates, consider these questions:

- **How** much experience does the candidate have in working with culturally diverse groups?
- **What** experience does the candidate have in working with community coalitions?
- **How** will the candidate involve members of the community at all stages of the evaluation?
- **How** will the candidate incorporate cultural competence into the evaluation?
- **How** will the candidate manage communication issues (e.g., language)?

### ***Getting Your Message Out***

The worst thing that can happen to your evaluation is for it to be printed, bound, and placed on a shelf. Your coalition needs a strategy for getting your message out.

Consider these questions:

**Who cares about your work?** Coalitions routinely share their results with key stakeholders: school districts, police departments, and public health departments. The culturally competent coalition gets the message out to the entire network—formal and informal—that makes up the community. Have your coalition draft a list that includes civic and social organizations, ethnic or racial groups, youth programs, and senior citizens—in short, the residents of the community.

**What do they care about?** Many organizations complete a comprehensive report and consider the job done. However, a bound, formal report will not work for everyone. Your coalition may need to break its big report into smaller sections that highlight information important to various constituents in your community. For example, statistical summaries will resonate with police or health departments, but not, perhaps, with a youth group. Another community partner may be more interested in your process than your outcomes. To determine how best to present your information, consider each unique group's needs.

Your organization's goals should match these needs. If you are trying to reach a particular group, providing summary information directed to its concerns is a powerful outreach tool. Consider the following additional ideas for getting your message out:

- **Invite** reporters from foreign-language newspapers to a press conference or information session.
- **Ask** teachers of graphics courses at the high school or local college to help you create colorful, eye-catching graphics to simplify information (i.e. infographic).
- **Contact** local media and ask if they need interview subjects for local public information shows. Send coalition members to talk about your initiatives.
- **Create** a “vision for our community” game by conducting a brainstorming session with coalition members.
- **Plan** a regularly scheduled “good news” report about successes in your community.
- **Create** a blog, e-mail blast system, or webpage designed especially for community members (separate from your official webpage) that serves as an electronic town hall.
- **Participate** in community festivals and hand out suitable information.
- **Organize** a community pride day to recognize and honor those working for change.

- **Create** a cartoon book in which the “superheroes” are community leaders.
- **Continue** to brainstorm, and give unconventional ideas a fair hearing (no matter how outlandish they may sound at first).

## Checklist to Assess Cultural Competence in the SPF

Every coalition’s planning for cultural competence will look different because each community is unique. When you develop your coalition’s plan for incorporating cultural competence into every phase of its work, ask, **“Does our coalition...”**

### Assessment

- ☐ Include diverse populations, cultures, ethnicities, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age groups etc. in data gathering?
- ☐ Encourage participation of bi-lingual community members to develop and implement our assessment?
- ☐ Use multiple forms of data collection; both qualitative and quantitative (key informant interviews, focus groups, listening sessions and surveys)?
- ☐ Recognize that diverse communities view alcohol and other substances differently and that culture influences how they should be addressed (i.e., drinking as an accepted form of socializing)?
- ☐ Recognize and include formal and informal community leaders in all aspects of building your coalition?
- ☐ Consider how community “institutions” and history-keepers can contribute to prevention efforts?
- ☐ Involve community in all aspects of data analysis (impacts buy-in in prevention strategies)?
- ☐ Incorporate community strengths as well as challenges in our assessment?

### Capacity

- ☐ Ensure that coalition staff reflects composition of community?
- ☐ Train staff and members on concepts of cultural competence?
- ☐ Establish principles and strategies that lead to diverse community leadership?
- ☐ Encourage participation of members that represent the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic composition of the community?
- ☐ Meet in different community settings and ask local cultural organizations to host at their site?

## Planning

- ☐ Ensure broad community participation in the planning process?
- ☐ Review and discuss the planning process with community members to increase understanding of planning?
- ☐ Broaden work and action plans to reflect input and outreach by diverse populations, cultures, ethnicities, and age groups to include in data gathering?
- ☐ Incorporate all diverse sub-populations in selection of strategies and seek methods to assure buy-in is present?

## Implementation

- ☐ Ensure activities include members of impacted communities (i.e., people involved should include target audiences and people in treatment and recovery)?
- ☐ Seek unique and creative methods to ensure all communication materials (e.g., brochures and posters, reports) reflect the diverse community?
- ☐ Continuously review, assess, and select strategies for implementation that reflect local culture and diversity?
- ☐ Ensure all communication materials are reviewed (tested) for appropriateness by target community prior to distribution (content, reading level, visuals, and distribution method)?
- ☐ Conduct appropriate prevention programs for the composition of our community?

## Evaluation

- ☐ Involve community in collection, interpretation, and dissemination of information (including youth)?
- ☐ Ensure evaluation process and products are relevant to diverse communities?
- ☐ Consider applying awareness of race and culture specific linguistic and community attributes and relevance to measure all coalition prevention efforts?
- ☐ Include various qualitative methods in your evaluation (e.g. interviews informal/formal)?
- ☐ Select an evaluation team with experience and expertise working in diverse communities (age, education, gender, ethnicity, etc.)?



## CHAPTER 4.

# Recruiting Members to Represent the Diversity and Culture in Your Community

While this *Cultural Competence Primer* has touched upon the subject many times, it is critically important to emphasize the need to proactively recruit coalition members that represent the diversity and culture in your community. This chapter provides specific examples of ways this can be accomplished.

### Utilize Your Community Description (Map) and History

The *Assessment Primer* identifies several ways to define and describe your community:

- **Community map:** A map of the community can be used to identify specific neighborhoods or sections of the community where members of diverse cultures live, work, and play. The map can also be used to identify areas that are underserved by community resources such as transportation, food availability, recreational facilities, access to health care, and other factors that may result in disparities.
- **Demographic data:** Information about the diversity of individuals that are represented by census data includes: age, race, ethnicity, housing, employment, family structure.
- **Communities within the community** includes:
  - A **community of place** is simply a group of people sharing a common geography such as a neighborhood, college, town, or region.
  - A **community of experience** is one in which people share or have shared a common experience. For example, the experience of wrestling with substance use disorder can be powerful enough to bind a group into a community and create a willingness to act on each other's behalf. This is why the phrase "the recovery community" is an apt description. War veterans, refugees, cancer survivors, and people who have historically faced discrimination are all powerful examples of communities of experience.
  - A **community of interest** is one in which people feel part of a community based on a common shared interest or activity that people are willing to organize around. Examples include occupations, hobbies, faith, sports, etc. A specific community of faith may be made up of members from many neighborhoods or surrounding towns, and the members may

come from a very diverse set of experiences and backgrounds. Despite these differences, they are willing to take action for each other's benefit because they see themselves as a community.

- **Community history:** The history of a community can explain how certain diverse populations have been positively or negatively impacted by events. Examples include: a mill closing or an industry relocating may result in a population of people seeking employment or living in poverty; a new factory or high-tech industry may result in an influx of new, highly educated high-wage earners; or a recent natural disaster may result in displacement and an influx of new construction workers. Gentrification, where renovation of deteriorated urban neighborhoods is replaced with more development, greater investment, and affluent residents commonly results in displacement of low-income families who lived in those communities for generations. Each of these instances may result in a population that may be exposed to a high degree of risk and/or in need of additional services.

## Identification of Diverse Members During Community Assessment Process

The **needs assessment** process provides an opportunity to identify individuals or groups:

- Who are experiencing a disproportional amount of adverse consequences from substance misuse and related issues.
- Who are exposed to higher levels of risk. Examples include populations living in neighborhoods with a high density of alcohol or marijuana selling establishments, or communities in transition or experiencing high levels of economic deprivation.

The **resource assessment** process provides an opportunity to identify hidden resources and protective factors that may not be known or recognizable. Examples include:

- People who speak multiple languages and can provide language translation services.
- Family and social traditions that build family attachment and community cohesion and connectedness.
- Facilities that can provide locations for community events.
- Grassroots and faith-based organizations that can provide needed supports and services for their community residents.

Alternatively, the **resource assessment** may identify populations that have no or limited access to existing family, health, mental health, or treatment services. Lack of transportation, healthy food sources, or recreational facilities may also be

discovered. In order to facilitate buy-in, it is important to identify and recognize the positive resources in the community and not just point out the shortcomings of a community or neighborhood.

## **Outreach to Community-based/Grassroot Organizations**

A valuable resource for recruiting members is to reach out to existing community-based organizations whose membership and/or client base may include members of diverse populations. Examples of these organizations can include:

- Religious or faith-based organizations
- Grassroot advocacy groups
- Family service agencies/youth-serving organizations
- Food banks, employment offices, and other social service organizations
- Recreational and cultural organizations
- Business or economic development associations

The effort to connect with these organizations may be conducted in either a **formal or informal** manner. The coalition may make a formal offer to meet with the leaders of the organizations to introduce the coalition and identify potential collaborations. Alternatively, coalition members may informally attend relevant meetings and events. It is important for coalition members to continually identify and participate in networking opportunities in the community it serves.

## **Creating Opportunities or Mechanisms for Disenfranchised or Hard-to-reach Populations to Become Involved**

Despite all the coalition's efforts to identify and engage members of diverse communities, there may still be populations that are not accessible, who choose not to become involved or are simply hard to reach. These groups can include: youth who do not participate in extra-curricular activities, youth who are not attending school, families where the parent(s) work swing shifts and/or commute long distances, communities that may distrust mainstream organizing efforts, immigrants with questionable legal status, people engaged in illegal activities, etc.

It is critical for the coalition to be creative and resourceful in its efforts to engage these populations. Examples include:

- One coalition had trouble reaching the residents of a specific community. So it had one of its members literally sit in a chair in a busy intersection in a neighborhood. Curious community members eventually approached the individual and asked why he was just sitting there. This provided an opening for dialogue with the community members.



- A coalition was having a hard time reaching parents who do not normally attend school functions or back-to-school nights. The coalition provided free refreshments at local sporting events, concerts, and other events typically frequented by parents in order to engage them.
- A coalition worked with social service agencies to reach clients receiving services such as maternal/child health, food assistance, and health care.
- A coalition formed and supported a community-based advisory committee made up of and chaired by residents of an economically deprived and difficult to reach community.

### ***Providing Opportunities for Involvement***

When reaching out to diverse populations, it is important for coalitions to provide appropriate opportunities for involvement. For example, some coalitions may conduct their meetings in a school or a police station – institutions with which some people may not have had positive experiences. Considerations for providing opportunities for involvement include:

- Go to “where the people are” – as we have discussed, the coalition can attend meetings and events to meet members of diverse populations.
- Time and location of meetings – ensure that meetings and events are at time and locations that are accessible.
- Options for involvement – when meeting with any individuals or groups the coalition should provide options for involvement (i.e., different coalition events or activities, offer to attend their events, etc.).
- Provide food and childcare – when conducting breakfast, lunchtime, or evening meetings it may be important to provide food and childcare to encourage participation.
- Communication methods – some individuals may not have access to electronic media or do not read newspapers or flyers. The coalition must identify the best way to communicate using appropriate methods.

## **Conclusion**

This primer presents information to help your coalition incorporate cultural competence into each step of the Strategic Prevention Framework. We hope that the ideas and concepts presented here will help you meet the challenges involved in becoming a culturally competent organization. Keep in mind as you move forward that you have entered a marathon. You are attempting to change yourself, your coalition, and your community—no small task, but certainly one well worth doing.

You know, perhaps better than anyone, how difficult it is to create positive change within a community that may itself be changing in unpredictable ways. A

sudden influx of new immigrants, an increase in gangs or gang-related violence, a new economic development plan, the closing or opening of a local business, and even events at the national level continually affect your community. For this reason, it is important to create a healthy community that can weather these constant challenges. What all this means, of course, is that your work is never truly done. However, your coalition does not have to struggle alone. You have resources available not only at the local level but at the Institute as well. We offer training, technical assistance, publication resources, and more. If you need help, contact us at 1-800-54-CADCA, ext. 240. We are always ready to assist.

To achieve a culturally competent coalition, coalitions must examine their existing practices and policies. Use these guidelines to help guide your efforts:

**Assess your level of cultural competence.** Determine the knowledge, skills, and resources you have now and identify any gaps.

How well does your staffing and training reflect the community you serve? Do your materials reflect the community as well? Do you regularly evaluate your programs in terms of cultural competence?

**Fill resource gaps.** Fill any gaps you identified in your assessment. Do you need staff, volunteer, or coalition member training? Do you need to work with partner organizations?

**Develop support for change throughout the coalition.** Consider naming a committee to develop a plan for enhancing cultural competence.

**Involve community groups.** Involving individuals from community groups will provide needed insights.

**Identify barriers for achieving cultural competence.** Identify what is not working and what barriers impede your efforts. Resist blaming or rehashing past “mistakes.”

**Develop goals and define steps required to achieve them.** Your coalition leaders should formally endorse the community’s goals and implementation steps. Ensure that they know about and understand the goals and strategies of the coalition and that you have methods for informing the community in place.

**Commit to ongoing evaluation and be willing to change.** Evaluation enables your coalition to determine how well the plan is working, take corrective action and, if appropriate, change course.

Coalitions often contact CADCA’s Institute with requests for training and technical assistance to help them work with diverse populations in their communities. They frequently indicate that they have difficulty reaching out to diverse groups, particularly immigrants, or have not received support from target populations. Many seek a quick fix to a complex problem. Coalition leaders

who have not paid close attention to cultural competence issues often find themselves in a quandary as to what steps they can take. Here are some general suggestions that your coalition may consider if you feel that you need to make improvements in this area:

**Place the issue on the agenda of an upcoming coalition meeting.** Coalitions often experience difficulty when dealing with racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, or other differences that impact their work. Such coalitions need to air out their issues rather than continuing to hope that they will disappear. Have the group engage in an honest, constructive discussion about the current situation. Take steps to ensure that this discussion does not degenerate into a grousing or finger-pointing session. Focus on ways to improve your coalition, not to blame previous leadership or members of underrepresented communities. Consider utilizing an independent facilitator to ensure the conversation maintains an open and inclusive discussion.

**Get coalition members to take ownership of the issue.** In many instances, cultural competence, diversity, and outreach issues are made the purview of paid staff, often an “outreach” worker. However, for your coalition to make progress on this issue, the coalition members need to take ownership of the issue and identify solutions. For example, if representation of diverse populations is a problem, then coalition members, not just staff, should be involved in identifying, reaching out to, and recruiting prospective members.

**Establish a subcommittee or task force to deal with cultural competence.** Often, a coalition board will form a committee to probe the issue, meet with community members, and make recommendations back to the entire board. Such groups can initiate action and plan concrete next steps. Research shows that such committees must have appropriate authority to be truly effective.

**Develop a plan.** Coalitions should consider the development of an action plan that will identify measurable outcomes and a blueprint for steps to achieve them. This plan should include goals, strategies and activities, persons responsible, and resources needed. For example, if lack of diversity in the coalition is an issue, the plan could contain the following: “Coalition will contact 24 organizations and agencies representing diverse groups in our community within the next six months with the goal of recruiting four new board members and signing six memoranda of understanding between the groups/agencies and the coalition.” Decide who will be responsible for implementing the plan. Periodically evaluate all aspects of your plan and make adjustments as necessary.

Finally, consider hiring a skilled facilitator if a situation blows up and threatens to undo the good work that your coalition has completed.

A Word About Words

As noted at the beginning of this primer, there are a number of terms that are sometimes used interchangeably. Often, the difference depends on who is funding your efforts or the field from which you come. The following chart highlights terms that are often used to describe the same or similar concepts.

A Word About Words		
What you want to accomplish?	What will you do?	How do you know what has been accomplished?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aim</li><li>• Goal</li><li>• Objective</li><li>• Problem Statement</li><li>• Target</li><li>• Vision</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Activity</li><li>• Approach</li><li>• Initiative</li><li>• Input</li><li>• Method</li><li>• Mission</li><li>• Policy</li><li>• Practice</li><li>• Program</li><li>• Strategy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Benchmark</li><li>• Indicator</li><li>• Intermediate</li><li>• Outcome</li><li>• Impact</li><li>• Measure</li><li>• Milestone</li><li>• Outcome</li><li>• Output</li><li>• Result</li></ul>

Glossary

**Acculturation.** The process of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns of another group. In immigrant groups, traditional cultural values and the protective value they provide may be weakened as a result.

**Activity.** Thing that you do—planned event(s) or project(s) used to implement a program.

**Aim.** A clearly directed intent or purpose. An anticipated outcome that is intended or that guides your planned actions. The goal intended to be attained.

**Approach.** The method used in dealing with or accomplishing. A logical process to solving an identified problem.

**Assimilation.** An intense process of integration in which members of an ethno-cultural group, typically immigrants or other minority groups, are absorbed into an established, generally larger community. This presumes a loss of many characteristics which make the newcomers unique.

**Community assessment.** A comprehensive description of your target community (however your coalition defines community). The assessment process is a systematic gathering and analysis of data about your community.

**Community-level change.** Change that occurs within the target population in your target area.

**Cultural awareness.** Being open to the idea of changing cultural attitudes.

**Cultural competence.** A set of behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or program, or among individuals. This enables individuals to function effectively in diverse cultural interactions and similarities within, among, and between groups. A culturally competent organization has the capacity to bring into its system many different behaviors, attitudes, and policies, and work effectively in cross-cultural settings to produce better outcomes.

**Cultural diversity.** Differences in race, ethnicity, language, nationality, religion, etc. among various groups within a community. A community is said to be culturally diverse if its residents include members of different groups.

**Cultural heterogeneity.** The differences within a cultural group. Large population groups, such as Asian Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, or African Americans possess many similarities, but also differ by tribe, national origin, language, geography, and culture.

**Cultural knowledge.** An understanding about some cultural characteristics, history, values, beliefs, and behaviors of another ethnic or cultural group.

**Cultural sensitivity.** Knowing that differences exist between cultures, but not assigning values to the differences (better or worse, right or wrong). Clashes on this point can easily occur, especially if a custom or belief in question goes against the idea of multiculturalism. Internal conflict (intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational) is likely to occur at times over this issue.

**Culture.** The shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, folklore, and institutions of a group of people that are unified by race, ethnicity, language, nationality, religion, or other major factors (i.e., gender, sexual orientation, faith, etc.)

**Demographic data.** Data that describes a place and the people living in a community. Commonly collected demographic data includes size, population, age, ethnic/cultural characteristics, socio-economic status, and languages spoken.

**Disaggregated data.** Statistics or other information that is separated into its parts, such as separating data by race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, geography, or culture.

**Diversity.** “Otherness,” or those human qualities that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet are present in other individuals and groups.

**Environment.** In the public health model, the environment is the context in which the host and the agent exist. The environment creates conditions that increase or decrease the chance that the host will become susceptible and the agent more effective. In the case of substance use, the environment is the societal climate that encourages, supports, reinforces, or sustains problematic use of substances.

**Ethnocentricity.** The belief in the inherent superiority of one's own ethnic group or culture, or a tendency to view alien groups or cultures from the perspective of one's own.

**Framework.** A structure that is used to shape something. A framework for a strategy or approach supports and connects the parts.

**Goal.** States intent and purpose and supports the vision and mission statements. For example: "To create a healthy community where substances are not misused by adults or used by youth."

**Initiative.** A fresh approach to something; a new way of dealing with a problem, a new attempt to achieve a goal or solve a problem, or a new method for doing this.

**Logic model.** Presents a diagram of how the effort or initiative is supposed to work by explaining why the strategy is a good solution to the problem at hand and making an explicit, often visual, statement of activities and results. It keeps participants moving in the same direction through common language and points of reference. Finally, as an element of the work itself, it can rally support by declaring what will be accomplished and how.

**Multiculturalism.** The preservation of different cultures or cultural identities within a unified society, as a state or nation.

**Objective.** The specific, measurable results a coalition plans to accomplish. Objectives serve as the basis by which to evaluate the work of the coalition. Each objective should have a timeframe by which it will be accomplished. "To reduce the number of youth in our community who smoke at age 15 from 18.5 percent to 10 percent by 2027."

**Outcome.** Used to determine what has been accomplished, including changes in approaches, policies, and practices to reduce risk factors and promote protective factors as a result of the work of the coalition. An outcome measures change in what you expect or hope will happen as a result of your efforts.

**Policy.** A governing principle pertaining to goals, objectives, and/or activities. It is a decision on an issue not resolved on the basis of facts and logic only. For example, the policy of expediting cases involving substances in the courts might be adopted as a basis for reducing the average number of days from arraignment to disposition.

**Practice.** A customary way of operation or behavior.

**Program.** Any activity, project, function, or policy with an identifiable purpose or set of objectives.

**Protective factors.** The factors that increase an individual's ability to resist the use and misuse of substances, e.g., strong family bonds, external support system, and problem-solving skills.

**Readiness.** The degree of support for, or resistance to, identifying substance use and misuse as a significant social problem in a community. Stages of community readiness for prevention provide an appropriate framework for understanding prevention readiness at the community and state levels.

**Resources.** Any or all of those things that can be used to improve the quality of community life; the things that can help close the gap between what is and what ought to be.

**Results.** The consequences and outcomes of a process or an assessment. Results may be tangible, such as products or scores, or intangible, such as new understandings or changes in behavior.

**Risk factors.** Those factors that increase an individual's vulnerability to substance misuse, e.g., academic failure, negative social influences, and favorable parental or peer attitudes toward involvement with substances.

**Strategy.** Identifies the overarching plan of how the coalition will achieve intended results.

**Sustainability.** The likelihood of a strategy to continue over a period of time, especially after specific funding ends.

**Targets.** Define who or what and where you expect to change as a result of your efforts.









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