Culture Brokering: Bridging the Gap Between Foreign-Born Consumers & the U.S. Disability Services

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What is the Purpose of this Session?

Introduce outreach strategies to promote the process of active inclusion of people with developmental disabilities from diverse cultures with your UCEDD.

Promote the use of the cultural brokering process as an effective approach to increase access and use of services and opportunities among individuals with developmental disabilities from diverse cultures.

Provide guidance on establishing and sustaining a cultural brokering mission within your UCEDD.
A common notion in laws such as IDEA and Vocational Act of 1973, as amended, state that “disability is a natural part of human experience and no way diminishes the rights of individuals to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, contribute to society, pursue meaningful careers, and enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of society which has further been endorsed by President Bush’s “New Freedom Initiative” but the promise of the these policies has not been realized by people with disabilities from underserved populations”. (National Counsel on Disability, 2003).
Overview of Community-Based Immigrant and Ethno-Cultural Serving Organizations
Overall Mission of ICI’s Community Capacity Building and Outreach Projects

We strive to build the capacity and foster systems change that enable diverse communities to be inclusive of people with disabilities. With a focus on traditionally unserved and underserved populations, we strive to secure the best services, supports, and opportunities for individuals, families, and communities through education, shared knowledge and strategic partnerships.
Who Are the Unserved and Underserved in Our Communities?
## Communities We Serve

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<th>Communities We Serve</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Ethiopians</td>
<td>African Americans</td>
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<td>Somalis</td>
<td>Native Americans</td>
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<td>Liberians</td>
<td>Indian, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan</td>
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<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Latinos (Puerto Ricans, Cubans, etc)</td>
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<td>Bosnians</td>
<td>Middle Easterners</td>
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<td>Russians</td>
<td>Portuguese and others...</td>
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<td>Vietnamese</td>
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Foreign-born Individuals
~ A Snapshot~

- Approximately 33.5 million foreign-born people live in the United States.
- The foreign born represent 11.7 percent of the U.S. population.
- People born in Latin America comprise approximately 53.3 percent of the U.S. foreign-born population.

Percent Distribution of Foreign Born by World Region of Birth: 2003

- Latin America: 53.3%
- Asia: 25.0%
- Europe: 13.7%
- Other Regions: 8.0%

Gaps Between the Disability Service System & Individuals and Their Families Who Are from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds

Disability Service System
- use of service jargon, lack of connection with local leaders in diverse communities, poor outreach efforts in unserved/underserved communities, minimal access to tools and skills to effectively serve diverse communities

Individuals, Families and their Community
- language and communication, lack of awareness of mainstream opportunities, perception of disability, uncertainty about benefits of involvement
Findings Related to Individuals with Disabilities from Diverse Cultures:

• Higher rates of acquired or birth disabilities
• More at risk, have fewer resources, have less knowledge about services
• Limited research on empirical studies relating to disability and diverse issues
• Program and service staff are typically not culturally, ethnically, linguistically diverse
• Insufficient and ineffective outreach by “mainstream” service systems
What Does Disability Mean in Diverse Communities?
Major Differences exist….

Causation
* Birth or acquired?
* Folk?
* Spiritual?
* Genetic?

Is it a disability? If so, by who’s definition?
Attitudes Toward Disability

**Somali Immigrants**
- Allah determines whether or not a child will be “disabled”, & this cannot be predicted or altered

**Asian**
- individuals with traditional beliefs may perceive a disability as evidence for transgressions committed in a previous life; disability caused by violating certain taboos include looking at certain animals, knitting, using scissors, & attending a funeral

**Number of African Societies**
- believe in God as a supreme being & believe all people are "God's children," including those with disabilities.
- individuals with disabilities are are valued members of the family
- others believe that witchcraft is strongly linked to chronic illness & disability

**Some Native American Communities**
- disability was “meant to be” so attempts to “fix” the person may upset the balance, which includes his or her contribution to the group; individual is not seen as deficient; instead, contributes to the community in his/her own way regardless of disability
What Works and How to Be More Inclusive...
Culture Brokering Model

INTERVENING CONDITIONS
Type of Disability
Communication
Age
Culture Sensitivity
Time
Cultural background
Gender
Power/powerlessness
Economics
Bureaucracy
Politics
Network
Stigma

STAGE 1
PERCEPTION
- Perception of the need for brokering
- Conflict, breakdowns

PROBLEMS
- Barriers to access and utilization
- Breakdowns in connections

STAGE 2
INTERVENTION
- Establishing trust and rapport
- Maintaining connections
STRATEGIES
- Advocating
- Negotiating
- Intervening
- Sensitizing
- Networking
- Innovating
- Mediating

STAGE 3
OUTCOME
- Establishing connections between the consumer and the rehabilitation system
- Maintaining facilitation across systems

RESOLUTION

LACK OF RESOLUTION
- Continued breakdown

An Application of the Culture Brokering Model Adapted for Rehabilitation

Interfering Conditions

• Daughter is labeled mentally retarded by service system
• Fear that government will take daughter away and place her in a hospital
• Family is poor and parents speak only Somali
• Family wants to care for daughter and does not want her to work
• No bilingual/bicultural rehabilitation counselors
• Service system cannot offer flexible funding
• Rehabilitation system committed to diversity

STAGE 1
Perception $ Problems
After numerous missed and late appointments, daughter is determined eligible for services. Parents and daughter fail to respond to follow-up meeting for service placement. Rehabilitation counselor recognizes the need for intervention.

STAGE 2
Intervention $ Strategies
Rehabilitation counselor identifies interfering conditions and employs the following strategies:
• Bilingual/bicultural counselor or transferred from another area office
• Sensitivity training conducted within the service office
• Information on disability disseminated to Somali community
• Counselor introduces this family to other Somali families with members who have disabilities
• Flexible funding used to fund attendance at national family conferences

STAGE 3
Outcome $ Resolution
• Family receives in-house respite services
• Daughter participates in an integrated recreation program
• Parents participate in a family support network

Or
Lack of resolution
• Parents ignore counselor’s requests for meeting
Stage 2

**Intervention**
Establishing trust and rapport
Maintaining connections

**Strategies**
Linking through:

- networking
- advocating
- innovating
- educating
Partnerships & Collaborations with Grassroots Community-Based Immigrant & Ethno-Cultural Organizations
OUTREACH-TO BEGIN

- TRUSTED GATEKEEPERS
- GRASSROOTS CONNECTIONS
Characteristics of a Community-Based Immigrant Organization

- Serve underrepresented populations from ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds and tend to be the center of life

- Are predominantly owned, managed, and/or staffed by individuals from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds
Why is it important to link with small grassroots community-based immigrant and ethno-cultural organizations?
Because…

- Trusted institutions that provide valuable services to the hardest-to-serve populations through a capacity building approach
- Address unique needs of the community and are very aware of current issues and problems
- Speak the language of their community
- Geographically accessible to the community and often tied with other important groups
- CBMOs are often in the best position… part of the network, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.  
  *Etc…*
Developing innovative culturally competent interventions...

AND

HOW...
Networking

The service provider as culture broker establishes links with other professionals who can provide services to a wider network of organizations and communities.

Initiate, develop and maintain contacts with diverse cultural/immigrant organizations and representatives prior to a project need.

Expand your mailing list and get on mailing lists linked to cultural organizations and faith-based organizations.

Use and contact specialized ethnic media, such as ethnic television, cable and radio stations, and community newspapers, to market your service.
Advocating

The redistribution of power and resources to the individual or group that has demonstrated a need

Sub-contracting with community-based and faith-based organizations to develop services and programs that are inclusive of people with disabilities from diverse communities

Display sensitivity and commit to educating not only the family but the community at large about disability rights and services
Innovating

To initiate or make a change by introducing or using a new idea, method or device

Informing the underserved communities with “easy-to-understand” and culturally appropriate stories about disability services and supports during English as a Second Language classes

Consider reaching out to the innermost circles of the underserved communities such as beauty parlors, laundromats, ethnic grocers and restaurants, healing and spiritual venues, local businesses and community organizations to spread the word about your service
Educating

Offer information workshops about disability services in unserved and underserved communities

Invite indigenous, native speakers in venues not typically used in community service to speak about disability issues from an ethnic-racial and linguistic perspective and help-seeking behaviors

Streamline paperwork and ensure that all materials are provided in various languages and formats to accommodate various individual needs

Train trusted community members in disability related services and supports so the community maintains the needed knowledge after outreach workers have departed
Case Example
The Association of University centers on Disabilities: Multicultural Council Resources
http://www.aucd.org/councils/multicultural/resources.htm

The Resource Center
http://nationalserviceresources.org/

The Center for International Rehabilitation Research Information and\ Exchange (CIRRIE): http://cirrie.buffalo.edu

Institute for Community Inclusion – www.communityinclusion.org

Readings


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