Culturally Effective Healthcare Organizations
A Framework for Success

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Executive Summary

Healthcare organizations across the United States are implementing a range of practices to keep pace with a diversifying patient population and workforce. These practices have the potential to improve quality of care, enhance patient safety and satisfaction, and reduce health disparities. Culturally effective organizations also gain a competitive edge in the marketplace because these practices enable them to meet legal, regulatory, and accreditation mandates, and cultivate a stable and engaged workforce. This document summarizes seven key elements that constitute a framework for healthcare institutions seeking to become culturally effective organizations. These elements are drawn from a cross-walk of the recommendations established by various healthcare industry accrediting and standard-setting organizations, as well as subject matter experts and the National CLAS Standards. For more information, see *Culturally Effective Healthcare Organizations: A Framework for Success* http://iasp.brandeis.edu/pdfs/2015/CE.pdf.

Framework for a Culturally Effective Organization

1. **Leadership** – Executive leadership and boards of directors formally model the organization's commitment by including consideration of cultural effectiveness in the strategic planning process and overall organizational expectations and practices. Leadership is responsible for guiding the organization to address biases and overcome resistance to change.

2. **Institutional Policies and Procedures** – Healthcare organizations take a systematic approach to formalizing their commitment to cultural effectiveness by articulating their vision through written policies, procedures, goals, and practices.

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3. **Data Collection and Analysis** – Data related to cultural effectiveness and workforce diversity informs strategic planning and aids in tailoring service delivery to meet community needs. Data is also used to identify treatment variation and differences in patient outcomes and satisfaction across groups, and to monitor the impact of cultural effectiveness-related policies and activities on health equity and outcomes.

4. **Community Engagement** – Organizations are more effective when they engage the community in a two-way process to learn, communicate, and share knowledge. This requires establishing relationships that position the community as an active partner in organizational decision-making, such as participation in the development and interpretation of community health needs assessments, serving on Boards, or advising the development of strategic plans.

5. **Language and Communication Access** – Effective communication is essential to the provision of quality, culturally competent care. Several federal civil rights laws require communication assistance: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In response, organizations are establishing policies and systems to identify and track patients' communication access needs, including preferred language, and to provide appropriate interpretation, translation, and communication assistance services.

6. **Staff Cultural Competence** – Healthcare organizations implement a range of practices to ensure that patients from all racial and ethnic backgrounds receive optimal patient care. To meet accreditation standards, healthcare organizations are integrating patients' cultural preferences into care delivery and supporting these changes with organizational policies and procedures which enable staff members to fulfill these expectations. The cultural competence of all staff requires continuous learning and professional development.

7. **Workforce Diversity and Inclusion** – The nation is becoming more diverse, and this diversity is reflected in the patient population and the workforce. However, racial and ethnic minority groups are underrepresented in health occupations and workplace settings that pay better and offer opportunities for advancement. Meanwhile, nursing and residential care facilities and home healthcare agencies are increasingly recruiting and employing professionals from diverse backgrounds and seeking ways to nurture increased multiculturalism among patients and staff. Healthcare organizations can address underrepresentation by diversifying their workforce and introducing practices to ensure that employees from all backgrounds have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the workplace.

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