



Cultural
competency

What is cultural competency?

- Skills that help you interact with other people with different backgrounds and experiences
- The goal is not to change your values or beliefs but to help you work with and help people who may be different than you



Why is cultural competency important in dentistry?



- Patients from different backgrounds may feel intimidated and unsure when seeking care
- Cultural barriers can impede access to care and contribute to poor health outcomes
- Your goal is to provide dental care in a supportive, nurturing environment
- Being culturally aware and sensitive to other people's worldviews allows you to better assist them

5 factors affecting access to care



1. Race and ethnicity

2. Cultural beliefs

3. Religious beliefs

4. Language

5. Low health literacy

1. Race and ethnicity



- Racial/ethnic demographics of U.S.
 - 57.8% White
 - 18.7% Hispanic
 - 12.4% Black
 - 6% Asian
- Microaggressions —unconscious messages that may demean a person based on their race
 - Saying you understand a person because you “don’t see race” or “have a friend” of the same race
 - Assuming a person doesn’t understand English because they are of another race or ethnicity
- Don’t make any assumption about a person based on their race

2. Cultural beliefs

- Cultural beliefs may affect patients' behaviors and attitudes toward dental health and dental care
- Examples of different cultural beliefs:
 - Discussing a disease or health disorder will cause it to occur
 - Rubbing the body with an object such as a coin can draw out some illnesses
 - Not following dietary advice if it doesn't conform to the foods or cooking methods they use
- Understand what a person's beliefs are and how that guides their behavior and decision making



3. Religious beliefs



- Religious belief can influence diet, medicine and modesty
- Examples of some religious differences:
 - Some people believe spiritual powers can affect the body and mind and cure disease
 - Women in some religions may need to see a female provider
- Give patients a chance to discuss their religious and spiritual needs and tailor their evaluation and treatment to meet those needs

4. Language

- 21.9% of U.S. residents speak a language other than English at home
- Low English proficiency may make it difficult for patients to make an appointment or discuss their dental problems
- Use Delta Dental's Language Assistance Program, which has phone assistance for enrollees in over 170 languages
- Delta Dental can provide on-site interpretation if you call 72 hours in advance
- Have forms and informational materials translated into the languages most relevant to your practice so they're available to patients



5. Health literacy



- People need to understand basic health information and services so they can make the right decisions
- Health literacy has nothing to do with actual literacy but affects how well people can understand the information you give them
- Use visuals such as photographs of the patient's teeth to illustrate diagnoses
- Have the patient repeat care instructions back to you so you know they understand them

Ways to communicate effectively

- Speak slowly
- Chunk information in bits — no more than three things to remember at one time
- Be careful with eye contact, physical touch or gestures — they can be interpreted differently among different cultures
- Keep written materials at a seventh-grade reading level or lower
- Use plain language — no medical jargon
 - Cavities, not caries; gum disease, not periodontal disease
 - Make sure scheduling an appointment and completing forms are simple
- Learn common phrases in languages common in your area (“Does your tooth hurt?” “Do you floss?”)
- Provide written summaries and instructions that patients can take home so they don’t forget



Thank you!

Visit our website for additional resources:

<https://www1.deltadentalins.com/dentists/resources.html>