

Health Equity & Cultural Competency

DEFINITIONS

Cultural Competency

Cultural and linguistic competence, according to the CDC, is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.

Cultural competence can be further described by the Health Equity Council as a developmental process that changes over time. Organizations must have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate attitudes, behaviors, and policies that allow them to effectively work across cultures (NACDD Cultural Competency Recommendations).

[Click here](#) to view an infographic on cultural competency facts.

Health Equity

Health equity means everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthier. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including lack of access to good jobs, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.

The chance at being healthy should not be denied because of who someone is or their socioeconomic status (Health Equity SFSU).

<https://healthequity.sfsu.edu/health-equity-resources>

Health Inequities

Health inequities are unjust and unfair differences in health that can be avoided. Health inequities are affected by economic, social, and environmental conditions.

- Economic inequities: Churches, governments, schools, and other institutions of such use their authority to create unfair disadvantages which can lead to poor educational outcomes or fewer job opportunities, causing economic inequities.
- Social inequities: When members of a community are treated unfairly due to their gender, race, sexual orientation, class, or immigration status, this is known as social inequity.
- Environmental inequities: The geographic location of where you live can determine your health status because lower income neighborhoods tend to be located in poor locations. Housing quality, safe streets, and access to healthy foods contribute to health outcomes.

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Health Disparities

Health disparities, according to the CDC, are defined as a type of difference in health that is closely linked with social or economic disadvantage. Health disparities negatively affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater social or economic obstacles to health. These obstacles stem from characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion such as race or ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, mental health, sexual orientation, or geographic location. Other characteristics include cognitive, sensory, or physical disability.

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/healthdisparities/>

Social Determinants of Health

Social determinants of health are factors from one's social environment that may either contribute to or detract from the health of individuals and/or communities. They are the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, and work.

Social determinants of health may include: education, socioeconomic position, gender and gender identity, income, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, discrimination, environment, access to services and ability to participate in society.

<https://chronicdisease.org/success-story/measures-of-social-determinants-of-health-linked-with-chronic-conditions/>

CLAS Standards

The collective set of culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS) mandates, guidelines, and recommendations issued by the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health intended to inform, guide, and facilitate required and recommended practices related to culturally and linguistically appropriate health services (*National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care Final Report, OMH, 2001*).

For more information about differences among these definitions, read the article titled "[A glossary for health inequalities](#)" from the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health.

