



# Ascertaining the Burden of Social Determinants of Health in Your Patients

## Guidelines & Strategies for Cultural Competency



The goal of culturally competent health care services is to provide the highest quality of care to every patient, regardless of race, ethnicity, or cultural background.

Just promoting healthy choices will not eliminate these and other health disparities. Instead, clinicians need to take action to reduce the impact of social determinants of health (SDOH). This includes

- Ensuring equitable access to high-quality health care through following guideline recommendations on screening, diagnosis, and treatment
- Ensuring equitable access to research studies to ensure adequate representation of populations afflicted with the disease being studied and grant access to novel therapies
- Addressing structural barriers to promote access to socially, culturally, and linguistically appropriate, respectful, and high-quality cancer care
- Addressing implicit and explicit institutional biases through diversification of the work force
- Addressing SDOH and speaking up when you see bias.

# Best Practices for Cultural Competency



## Value Diversity

Respecting other cultures goes beyond merely tolerating people of differing backgrounds and viewpoints, but embraces cultural differences as strengths. Always be aware of the sociocultural factors that impact the relationships between patients and clinicians. Work to become familiar with aspects of culture that may impact your patient's approach to health care.

## Explore Self-Awareness

Many people do not recognize personal biases against people of different cultures. Assessment tools are available on the internet to help you identify and work to eliminate them.

## Be Cognizant of Cultural Differences

Cultural differences can be a source of unintended conflict that negatively impact health care. People often carry stereotypes or underlying feelings about working with someone who is different. Simple things like respecting cultural differences regarding physical distance, physical contact, eye contact, and speed and volume of talking can help to minimize misunderstandings.

## Accept Responsibility

While none of us will be able to erase health care disparities by ourselves, recognizing our own responsibility for understanding the cultural aspect of health and illness is a first step. We should each accept our personal responsibility to help combat racism, classism, ageism, sexism, homophobia, and other kinds of biases and discrimination that occur in health care settings and lead through example.

## Adapt Materials and Approaches

When needed, bring in outside assistance in communicating with your patient, whether that means recruiting a relative or an outside person to translate. As appropriate, make sure your programs and services incorporate an understanding of cultural diversity.

## Use a Team Approach

As you address patient-specific barriers to care, share your insights and experiences with you colleagues. Consider involving family and/or community members to support patients.

## Implement Structural Changes

Many patients feel more comfortable with clinical staff that are of their same ethnicity. Recruiting and retaining minority staff can improve the patient experience. Likewise, training to increase cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills increases the cultural sensitivity for all staff. Offering extended hours may help patients balance work and health needs.