



Cultural Competency, Diversity, and Inclusion Plan

Purpose

The Cultural Competency, Diversity, and Inclusion Plan enhances the cultural competence of staff in support of our mission, values, and practice principles. This plan will be reviewed annually by the management team and revised as appropriate.

PCE Mission

Working in partnership with youth, families and the community, Partnership for Children of Essex (PCE) creates a pathway for hope and improves the quality of life for youth and their families in Essex County.

PCE Vision

PCE is devoted to creating and sustaining a positive work environment that promotes teamwork, creativity, and leadership that encourages personal growth and development. Using our Wraparound Model of Care with the youth and families we serve, we instill hope, resilience, and empowerment. Through our commitment to quality services, we excel as leaders in our field.

PCE Core Values

- Families are equal partners in the service planning and delivery process
- The care management process is supportive and respectful of family culture, values, strengths, and preferences
- We believe that all youth and families can grow, improve, become resilient and thrive.

PCE Guiding Principles

PCE provides care management for youth and families following the Wraparound model and principles:

- Family voice and choice
- Team based
- Natural supports
- Collaboration
- Community-based
- Culturally competent
- Individualized
- Strength-based
- Unconditional
- Outcome based

- We incorporate youth and family's strengths, needs, abilities, and preferences in Wraparound service planning, using family friendly language.
- The primary service delivery shall be through formal and informal resources in neighborhood-based organizations and/or provider networks or collaboratives.
- The youth /family and significant persons in their lives will be partners on the Child & Family Team (CFT) that plans services and makes decisions.
- Individual Service Planning and subsequent linkage with services will be immediate, responsive, and specific.
- All service system partners participate with the understanding that there is a no eject, no reject policy towards youth and families referred for services and a common mission among affiliates.
- We train our staff to recognize and manage anger, fear, and/or distress in youth and families. We do not use seclusion and restraint as interventions.

What is Cultural Competence?

Partnership for children of Essex (PCE) recognizes the need to enhance services for culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate social services requires an understanding of cultural competence. PCE is committed to enhancing the cultural competency of all its employees through the integration **and transformation of knowledge** about individuals and groups of people **into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes**. Through this process PCE will enhance the quality of services provided to our diverse community. The term cultural competence is used to describe a set of skills, values and principles that acknowledge, respect and work towards optimal interactions between the individual and the various cultural and ethnic groups that an individual might come in contact with. At the heart of cultural competency is effective communication that drives mutual respect and empathy. Cultural competency encourages acknowledgement and acceptance of differences in appearance, behavior, and culture. By having an in-depth understanding of how to interact with people from a wide range of cultures effectively and respectfully, the individual maximizes the chance of optimal interactions in a professional setting (humanservicesedu.org).

The pursuit of a high degree of cultural competency is extremely important to PCE because our community and the youth and families we serve is comprised of a rich and wide variety of different cultures.

At PCE, it is upheld that culture plays an integral part in societal makeup and greatly impacts human functioning. PCE encourages staff to exercise competence in providing care to youth and families of all cultural groups, regardless of age, race, spiritual beliefs, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, political beliefs, immigration status, socioeconomic status, or mental and physical ability (adapted from NASW, Code of Ethics).

As a culturally competent workforce, PCE staff must be willing to produce positive change through understanding the cultural contexts of the families and communities which they serve, and/or be willing to develop the skills needed to work within these contexts. This means incorporating cultural uniqueness throughout the Wraparound process to ensure that all members of the CFT feel respected and included in the development and implementation of the youth/family's Individualized Service Plan (ISP).

A culturally competent organization is characterized by:

- Acceptance and respect for difference
- Self-assessment regarding culture competence
- Careful attention to the dynamics of cultural differences
- Continuous expansion of cultural knowledge and resources.
- Adaptation of service practices to meet the needs of diverse populations

PCE manifests its cultural competence in valuing diversity, having the capacity for regular self-assessment, being conscious of the dynamics among different cultures, institutionalizing cultural knowledge, and adapting practices to cultural diversity.

Developmental Planning

To facilitate the developmental process, a cross-level Cultural Competence and Diversity Committee was established in June 2020. The committee gathers ideas to design programs and organization-wide activities to enhance the cultural competence of our staff.

The goal of the Cultural Diversity Committee is to establish a deeper understanding and appreciation of our unique differences through connecting, planning, and executing services and practices that are inclusive of all areas of diversity within the agency and community.

Since becoming culturally competent is an active process, planning for such development is what drives learning and growth in PCE. We rely on feedback-based planning to continuously build cultural knowledge, appreciation, and capacity to tailor our services and practices to meet the needs and expectations of the diverse communities we serve.

- PCE builds upon its strengths to continually improve its cultural competency, diversity and inclusion:
- A nurturing environment that allows for formal and informal opportunities to discuss diversity and inclusion.
- Commitment to hiring diverse staff which reflects the cultural diversity of youth and families in which we serve.
- A positive reputation in the community around our willingness to collaborate and address the diverse needs of the community.
- Engaging in open communication with our youth and families regarding their cultural/ethnic backgrounds and ensuring care management is respectful of their preferences.
- Identifying employee strengths and assigning families accordingly when possible.
- Established leadership and management who are accepting of cultural growth.

Goals of the Cultural Competence and Diversity Committee

PCE strives to continuously achieve the following:

- Build on our knowledge and awareness of all cultural groups which we serve.

- Increase awareness and mindfulness on how personal stereotypes and biases can impact the practice and services provided to the community.
- Provide cultural resources and tools necessary to address any identified barriers in working with a diverse population.
- Promote social justice for vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people within the community.

Cultural Competence and Diversity Committee Action Plan

- Collaborate with system partners to address any identified disparities in services and treatment using data from Power BI and other relevant sources.
- Trainings and information sessions will be scheduled throughout the year with a goal of:
 - Supporting staff on how to have conversations with youth and families around their cultural beliefs and practices to customize each Individual Service Plan (ISP).
 - Providing information and resources specific to demographic populations.
 - Providing information to staff on how to recognize personal biases when working with diverse populations.
 - Encouraging discussion of cultural competency in supervision.
- Ensure materials and resources are provided in languages specific to youth and families.
- Accurately capture each family's cultural background which will be integrated in the Individual Service Plan (ISP).
- Plan events throughout the year that will celebrate diversity.
- Continuously partner with and engage in a diversity of events and activities to build rapport with communities in Essex County.
- Conduct periodic employee surveys and focus groups to identify the areas where PCE supports inclusive practices, as well as where there is room for growth.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

Partnership for Children of Essex is dedicated to creating an inclusive environment for everyone. We embrace the unique experiences, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds that employees and all stakeholders bring to our organization. PCE strives to foster an environment where our employees and stakeholders feel respected, valued, and empowered, and creates a workforce that reflects the community we serve. We embrace employees' and stakeholders' differences in age, color, disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and other characteristics that make our employees unique.

PCE is committed to modeling diversity and inclusion and to maintaining an inclusive environment with equitable treatment for all. PCE exhibits this by executing the following action items to help promote diversity and inclusion in our workplace:

- See diversity, inclusion, and equity as connected to our mission and critical to ensuring the well-being of our staff and the families and communities we serve.
- Acknowledge and dismantle any inequities within our policies, systems, programs, and services, and continually update and report organizational progress.
- Practice and encourage transparent communication in all interactions.

- Lead with respect and tolerance. We expect all employees to embrace this notion and to express it in workplace interactions and through everyday practices.
- Pursue cultural competency throughout our organization by creating substantive learning opportunities and formal, transparent policies.
- Develop and present sessions on diversity, inclusion, and equity to provide information and resources internally to our staff.
- Develop a system for being more intentional and being conscious to avoid bias during the hiring, promotion, and evaluation processes.
- Train our hiring team on equitable practices.

PCE's diversity, equity and inclusion policies are applicable to all aspects of our business operations, including but not limited to, access to service, family engagement, staff recruitment and development, in the development of community provider relationships.

We strive to create a safe and rewarding environment that encourages:

- Respectful communication and cooperation between all employees
- Teamwork and employee participation with representation of all perspectives
- Employer and employee involvement with to the communities we serve to promote a greater understanding and respect for diversity, equity, and inclusion

PCE adheres to the equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws and related regulatory requirements to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all employees while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that could prevent full participation of some groups.

We practice inclusion by making each employee and family we serve feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued as a team member. We expect every employee to grant and accept inclusion from others when communicating and collaborating at work through demonstrating cultural competence by being sensitive to different cultural backgrounds as well as being effective in working with them.

Cultural competency is one of the key principles of our practice model, Wraparound, in managing care for the families we serve. On an annual basis, we review our staff demographics and submit the EEO-1 form to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.