

# Attitudes and Behaviors of Culturally Competent Counselors

## Sensitivity

- Understanding the client's experiences of racism, stereotyping, and discrimination
- Exploring the client's cultural identity and what it means to her/him
- Actively involving oneself with individuals from diverse backgrounds outside the counseling setting to foster a perspective that is more than academic or work related
- Adopting a broader view of family and, when appropriate, including other family or community members in the treatment process
- Tailoring treatment to meet the cultural needs of the client (e.g., providing outside resources for traditional healing)

## Respect

- Exploring, acknowledging, and validating the client's worldview
- Approaching treatment as a collaborative process
- Investing time to understand the client's expectations of treatment
- Using consultation, literature, and training to understand culturally specific behaviors that demonstrate respect for the client
- Communicating in the client's preferred language

## Commitment to Equality

- Proactively addressing racism or bias as it occurs in treatment (e.g., processing derogatory comments made by another client in a group counseling session)
- Identifying the specific barriers to treatment engagement and retention among the populations being served
- Recognizing that equality of treatment does not translate to equity—that equity is defined as equality in opportunity, access, and outcome (Srivastava 2007)
- Endorsing counseling strategies and treatment approaches that match the unmet needs of diverse populations to ensure treatment engagement, retention, and positive outcomes

## Humility

- Recognizing that the client's trust is earned through consistent and competent behavior rather than the potential status and power that is ascribed to the role of counselor
- Acknowledging the limits of one's competencies and expertise and referring clients to a more appropriate counselor or service when necessary
- Seeking consultation, clinical supervision, and training to expand cultural knowledge and cultural competence in counseling skills
- Seeking to understand oneself as influenced by ethnicity and cultural groups and actively seeking a nonracist identity
- Being sensitive to the power differential between client and counselor

## Flexibility

- Using a variety of verbal and nonverbal responses, approaches, or styles to suit the cultural context of the client
- Accommodating different learning styles in treatment approaches (e.g., the use of role-plays or experiential activities to demonstrate coping skills or alcohol and drug refusal skills)
- Using cultural, socioeconomic, environmental, and political contextual factors in conducting evaluations
- Integrating cultural practices as treatment strategies (e.g., Alaska Native traditional practices, such as tundra walking and sustenance activities)

## Openness

Recognizing the value of traditional healing and help-seeking practices

Developing alliances and relationships with traditional practitioners

- Seeking consultation with traditional healers and religious and spiritual leaders

when appropriate

- Understanding and accepting that persons from diverse cultural groups can

use different cognitive styles (e.g., placing more attention on reflecting and processing than on content; being task oriented)