

# ONE COMMUNITY — DIVERSITY IN LIBRARIES

## Cultural Competence: Serving Our Local Global Clientele

### EIGHT THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PROMOTE CULTURAL COMPETENCE

1. Make a commitment to expand knowledge about culture and cultural competence in your library.
2. Develop an understanding of the various cultural groups in your library's target service area.
3. Include cultural competence principles in the strategic planning, policy development, program design, and service delivery process.
4. Be committed to promoting cultural competence. Develop this commitment through staff development and training, hiring, retention, career advancement, performance evaluations, and employee policies that support culturally competent and linguistically appropriate practice.
5. Make hiring decisions that reflect the diversity of your community. Make sure that staff develops an understanding of and respect for the richness, strength, and additional capacity culture and diversity bring to the workplace.
6. Be active in local communities. Encourage and support staff to become involved in community boards and cultural activities.
7. Create formal partnerships with community organizations and encourage staff to actively engage communities in the development of library programs and services.
8. Become more proactive about recognizing and resolving conflicts that can occur when differing cultures interact.

### KEY CONCEPTS

**Cultural Competence:** The ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and faiths or religions, in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals and communities, and protects and preserves the dignity of each.

Cultural competence requires that organizations:

- Develop or update their cultural competence policies
- Assess their level of cultural competence
- Provide training in cultural competence for staff at all levels on an ongoing basis
- Hire and retain a diverse staff

For individuals, cultural competence is a continuum that encompasses several stages:

- Understanding one's own cultural background
- Acknowledging the different cultures, value systems, beliefs, and behaviors of others
- Recognizing that cultural difference is not synonymous with cultural inferiority
- Learning about the cultures of others

**Linguistic competence:** The capacity of an organization and its personnel to communicate effectively, and convey information in a manner that is easily understood by diverse audiences including persons of limited English proficiency, those who have low literacy skills or are not literate, and individuals with disabilities. The organization must have policy, structures, practices, procedures and dedicated resources to support this capacity.

---

**Resources:**

Cultural Competence. Child Welfare League of America  
<http://www.cwla.org/programs/culturalcompetence/culturalabout.htm>

Cultural Competence – Conceptual Frameworks. National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University Center for Child & Human Development  
<http://www3.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/lc>

Cultural Competence and the New Americans. Adoption.com  
<http://library.adoption.com/Cultural-Diversity-and-Racism/Cultural-Competence-and-the-quotNew-Americansquot/article/3944/3.html>

Culture. ISCOPEs – The George Washington University  
[http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eiscopes/LearningMods\\_Culture.htm](http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eiscopes/LearningMods_Culture.htm)

MULTILINGUAL MATERIALS ACQUISITION CENTER (MULTIMAC)  
THE NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY

[ibetancourt@npl.org](mailto:ibetancourt@npl.org) # <http://multimac.npl.org>  
973-733-3637, 800-645-0068 *in NJ only*