Section Five
DEVELOPING CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Page

- **Diversity…….. 1**
- **Guiding Principles for Achieving a Diverse CASA Network…… 2**
- ***Activity: Cultural Pursuit*……..……. 4**
- **Cultural Diversity Vocabulary……. 6**
- **Cultural Heritage……... 9**
- ***Activity: Exploring Your Culture and Perceptions*……..... 10**
- **Disproportionality in Child Advocacy……. 12**
- **Culturally Competent Child Advocacy……. 13**
- **10 Benefits of Practicing Culturally Competent Child Advocacy……. 15**
- ***Activity: Assessing Your Cultural Competence*……. 16**
- **Review Questions……..…….. 17**
- **Resources……. 18**

Diversity

As a general term "diversity" refers to difference or variety. In the context of CASA volunteer work "diversity" refers to differences or variety in people's identities or experiences: ethnicity, race, national origin, language, gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, and so on. The term "cultural competence" refers to the ability to work effectively with people from a broad range of backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints.

The United States is becoming increasingly multicultural. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, approximately 30% of the population currently belongs to a racial or ethnic minority group. The Census Bureau projects that by the year 2100, non-Hispanic Anglo will make up only 40% of the U.S. population. Currently the nation's 16th largest state, Arizona is also the nation's 2nd fastest-growing state, second to Utah.

Arizona's Racial and Ethnic Compositions (2008 Census Bureau estimates)	
Anglo (not including Hispanic/Latino)	58.4%
American Indian/Alaska Native	4.8%
African American	4.9%
Asian	2.5%
Hispanic/Latino	30.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander/Native Islander	0.2%
Two or more races	1.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – Quick Facts 2008

As you work through this section, keep in mind the particular cultural groups with whom you will work as a CASA volunteer.

Understanding issues related to diversity and culturally competent child advocacy is critical to your work as a CASA. It can enhance your ability to see things from new and different perspectives and to respond to each child's unique needs. Developing cultural competence is a lifelong process. This section offers a starting point for understanding key issues, and the case studies and examples throughout this manual encourage continued exploration.

Guiding Principles for Achieving a Diverse CASA Network

THE NATIONAL VISION

The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association "stands up" for abused and neglected children.

Building on our legacy of quality advocacy, we acknowledge the need to understand, respect, and celebrate diversity including race, gender, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and the presence of a sensory, mental, or physical disability. We also value diversity of viewpoints, life experiences, talents, and ideas.

A diverse CASA network helps us to better understand and promote the well-being of the children we serve. Embracing diversity makes us better advocates by providing fresh ideas and perspectives for problem solving in our multicultural world, enabling us to respond to each child's unique needs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ACHIEVING A DIVERSE CASA NETWORK

1. Ethnic and cultural background influences an individual's attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors.

2. Each family's characteristics reflect adaptations to its primary culture and the majority culture, the family's unique environment, and the composite of the people and needs within it.

3. A child can be best served by a CASA volunteer who is culturally competent and who has personal experience and work experience in the child's own culture(s).

4. To understand a child, a person should understand cultural differences and the impact they have on family dynamics.

5. No cultural group is homogenous; within every group there is great diversity.

6. Families have similarities yet are all unique.

7. In order to be culturally sensitive to another person or group, it is necessary to evaluate how each person's culture impacts his/her behavior.

8. As a person learns about the characteristic traits of another cultural group, he/she should remember to view each person as an individual.

9. Most people like to feel that they have compassion for others and that there are new things they can learn.

10. Value judgments should not be made about another person's culture.

11. It is in the best interest of children to have volunteers who reflect the characteristics (i.e., ethnicity, national origin, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, and socioeconomic status) of the population served.

Reflection Questions

- *Which principle do you think is most important and why?*

- *What questions or observations do you have about the vision and guiding principles?*

Activity: Cultural Pursuit

Read the following statements and circle/initial the statements that describe you.

Have had your name mispronounced	Know what *Nisei*[1] means	You know what "comparable worth[2]" means
Have a parent or grandparent who was not born in the United States	Have had to overcome physical barriers in life	You know what Rosa Parks[3] did
Are from a mixed-heritage background	Know what an upside-down pink triangle[4] symbolizes	Have traced your family lineage or heritage
Are bilingual/multi-lingual	Know what Kwanzaa[5] is	Know why the Irish immigrated to the United States in the 1840s[6]
Have been misunderstood by a person from a different culture	Know the meaning of "mensch[7]"	Have seen a step show[8]
Can name the West Coast equivalent to Ellis Island[9]	Have experienced being stereotyped	Have an *abuela*[10]
Know how many federally recognized Native American tribes[11] are in the United States	You listen to salsa music	Know who Harvey Milk[12] was
Can name the lawyer who argued for the petitioner in *Brown v. Board of Education*[13]	You know the significance of eagle feathers[14]	Know what *lumpia*[15] is

Numbered concepts have additional information on the next page.

Cultural Pursuit Activity Key

[1] **Nisei** [pronounced nee-say]: Second-generation Japanese American; Issei [ee-say] is first-generation, and Sansei [sahn-say] is third-generation.

[2] **"Comparable worth"**: Equal pay for equal work.

[3] **Rosa Parks** (1913–2005): An African American civil rights leader who, in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, resisted a local ordinance by refusing to give up her seat to a white man and move to the back of the bus. Her actions were a catalyst for bus strikes and much of the civil rights movement.

[4] **Upside-down pink triangle**: A symbol used in Nazi Germany to identify gay male concentration camp inmates; lesbians were identified with a black triangle.

[5] **Kwanzaa**: An African American and pan-African holiday established in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga. Occurring from December 26 to January 1, Kwanzaa, which means "first fruits of the harvest," is a time to celebrate family, community, and culture.

[6] **Why the Irish immigrated in the 1840s**: For political and economic reasons. This was the period of the potato famine.

[7] **"Mensch":** A Yiddish word for a decent, honorable person.

[8] **Step show**: Traditional African American dance that originated within slave communities (often, Celtic dance—Scottish and Irish communities also step dance).

[9] **West Coast equivalent to Ellis Island**: Angel Island off the California coast, which served as an entry point primarily for Asian immigrants.

[10] **Abuela** [ah-BWAY-la]: Spanish word for grandmother.

[11] There are more than 550 **federally recognized tribes** in the United States, including over 200 village groups in Alaska. "Federally recognized" means these tribes and groups have a special, legal relationship with the US government. This relationship is referred to as a government-to-government relationship.

[12] **Harvey Milk**: A San Francisco city supervisor who was the first openly gay elected official in the country. He was assassinated because he was gay.

[13] **Lawyer who argued for the petitioner in Brown v. Board of Education**: Thurgood Marshall, in the case to end school segregation based on race.

[14] **Eagle feathers**: A symbol of significance for many Native Americans, they are often given as gifts or worn by individuals during significant life events, such as graduation and marriage.

[15] **Lumpia** [LOOM-pee-yah]: A Filipino food made of thin dough rolled around vegetables or meat and deep-fried.

Cultural Diversity Vocabulary

Developing a working vocabulary related to issues of diversity can help you communicate more effectively with other people and examine where you have more to learn. How well-versed is your diversity vocabulary? Read the list below to find out.

Ableism	Discrimination or prejudice based on a limitation, difference, or impairment in physical, mental, or sensory capacity or ability.
Ageism	Discrimination or prejudice based on age, particularly aimed at the elderly.
Bias	A personal judgment, especially one that is unreasoned or unfair.
Biracial	Of two races; usually describing a person having parents of different races.
Classism	Discrimination or prejudice based on socioeconomic status.
Cultural Dominance	The pervasiveness of one set of traditions, norms, customs, literature, art, and institutions, to the exclusion of all others.
Cultural Competence	The ability to work effectively with people from a variety of cultures, ethnicities, races, religions, classes, sexual orientations, and genders.
Cultural Group	A group of people who consciously or unconsciously share identifiable values, norms, symbols, and some ways of living that are repeated and transmitted from one generation to another.
Cultural Sensitivity	An awareness of the nuances of one's own and other cultures.
Culturally Appropriate	Demonstrating both sensitivity to cultural differences and similarities and effectiveness in communicating a message within and across cultures.
Culture	The shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, folklore, and institutions of a group of people who are unified by race, ethnicity, language, nationality, sexual orientation, and/or religion.
Disability	A limitation, difference, or impairment in a person's physical, mental, or sensory capacity or ability. Many communities prefer the term "differently abled" over "disabled."
Discrimination	An act of prejudice or a manner of treating individuals differently due to their appearance, status, or membership in a particular group.
Disproportionally Dominant Group/Culture	Overrepresentation or under representation of various groups in different social, political, or economic institutions; the "mainstream" culture in a society, consisting of the people who hold the power and influence.
Ethnicity	The classification of a group of people who share common characteristics, such as language, race, tribe, or national origin.

Ethnocentrism	The attitude that one's own cultural group is superior.
Gender	A social or cultural category generally assigned based on a person's biological sex.
Gender Identity	A person's sense of being; masculine, feminine, or some combination thereof.
Heterosexism	An ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, or relationship.
Homophobia	Fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality, homosexuals, or same-sex relationships.
Institutional Racism	Biased policies and practices within an organization or system that disadvantage people of a certain race or ethnicity.
Language	The form or pattern of communication—spoken, written, or signed—used by residents or descendants of a particular nation or geographic area or by anybody of people. Language can be formal or informal and includes dialect, idiomatic speech, and slang.
Minority	The smaller in number of at least two groups. Can imply a lesser status or influence and can be seen as an antonym for the words "majority" and "dominant."
Multicultural	Designed for or pertaining to two or more distinct cultures.
Multiracial	Describing a person, community, organization, etc., composed of many races.
National Origin	The country or region where a person was born.
Person of Color	Usually used to define a person who is not a descendant of people from European countries. Individuals can choose whether or not to self-identify as a person of color.
Prejudice	Over-generalized, oversimplified, or exaggerated beliefs associated with a category or group of people, which are not changed even in the face of contrary evidence.
Race	A socially defined population characterized by distinguishable physical characteristics, usually skin color.
Racism	The belief that some racial groups are inherently superior or inferior to others; discrimination, prejudice, or a system of advantage and/or oppression based on race.
Sexism	Discrimination or prejudice based on gender or gender identity.
Sexual Orientation	Describes the gender(s) of people to whom a person feels romantically and/or sexually attracted: *Heterosexual:* Attracted to the other gender; *Homosexual:* Attracted to the same gender (i.e., gay or lesbian); *Bisexual:* Attracted to either gender.

Socioeconomic Status	Individuals' economic class (e.g., poor, working-class, middle-class, wealthy) or position in society based on their financial situation or background.
Stereotype	A highly simplified conception or belief about a person, place, or thing, based on limited information.
Transgender	Describes a person whose gender identity differs from his/her assigned gender and/or biological sex.
Transsexual	A person whose gender identity differs from his/her assigned gender and/or biological sex. Many transsexuals alter their biological sex through hormones and/or surgery.
Values Xenophobia	What a person believes to be important and accepts as an integral part of who he/she is; a fear of all that is foreign, or a fear of people believed to be "foreigners."

Cultural Heritage

Most people are knowledgeable and open about some aspects of their culture. About other aspects, they may have either less information or a heightened sense of privacy. In some matters they might fear judgment or discrimination. People from the dominant culture may not recognize their own values, behaviors, or traditions as cultural at all—they may think of them simply as "normal."

As a foundation for expanding your understanding of other cultures, it is important to be thoroughly acquainted with your own. Cultural competence begins with understanding and appreciating your own identity. You are a "culturally rich" individual with your own blend of culture, ethnicity, race, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, religion or spirituality, geographic location, and physical and mental abilities.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Names are an important element of identity. Perhaps your first or last name has family or cultural significance, or maybe you have changed your name to better reflect who you are. Think about the following questions:

- Who gave you your name? Why?
- What is the ethnic origin or meaning of your name?
- Does your name have cultural significance?
- Is the ethnic origin of your name different from the ethnic origin with which you identify or the ethnic group of which you are a member?
- Do you have more than one ethnic origin?
- Do you have a nickname?
- Have you taken a name different from the one you were given at birth?

Activity: Exploring Your Culture and Perceptions

PART I

Choose three of the categories from the list below.

- **Race**
- **Family Form** *(single parent, married with no children, etc.)*
- **Ethnicity** *(cultural description or country of origin)*
- **Gender**
- **Geographic Identity** *(rural or urban; in the US, eastern, western, midwestern, etc.)*
- **Age**
- **Sexual Orientation**
- **Religion or Spirituality**
- **Language**
- **Disabilities**
- **Socioeconomic Status** *(low-income, working-class, middle class, wealthy)*

Think about your culture and life experiences, and describe yourself, your family of origin, or your current family situation using these three categories.

- How did you choose the three categories?

- Would you have been uncomfortable sharing your answers in a large group?

- What contributes to your feelings of safety when you are asked to disclose personal information?

PART II

Now imagine that you are the parent of a child just placed in foster care and you are describing yourself to someone who has power over your life—for instance, the caseworker, the judge, or an attorney.

- When you describe yourself to this person, what might you leave out or try to make fit what you think might be more acceptable to them?

- If you often had to do this, what do you think would happen to these parts of yourself?

PART III

As a CASA volunteer, you will have influence in the lives of the children and families in your cases.

- How might your position as a CASA affect your ability to establish rapport, communicate effectively, and gather accurate information?

- How do your personal values impact your ability to be unbiased?

Disproportionality in Child Advocacy

Disproportionality is the experience of overrepresentation or underrepresentation of various groups in different social, political, or economic institutions. For example, women in the United States are overrepresented as single heads of household, and African Americans and Latinos are overrepresented in the U.S. prison population.

- There is no difference between races in the likelihood that a parent will abuse or neglect a child, but there is a great difference between races in the likelihood that a child will be removed from home and placed in foster care. Compared to Anglo children, African American children are four times more likely to be placed in care, American Indian and Native Alaskan children are three times more likely, and Hispanic children are twice as likely.

  Casey Family Programs, www.casey.org.

- Children of color make up almost two-thirds of the 540,000 children in the foster care system, although they constitute just over one-third of the child population in the US.

  W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Families for Kids Project, www.wkkf.org.

- The number of white children entering foster care in a given year is greater than the number of African American children. Yet, African American children make up a disproportionate, and increasing, share of those who remain.

  Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data

- The percentage of Hispanic children in foster care almost tripled from 7% in 1982 to 19% in 2006.

  Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2009

- Children of color experience a higher number of placements than Anglo children, and they are less likely to be reunified with their birth families.

  Casey Family Programs

Reflection Questions

- *What do you think causes disproportionality in the child welfare system?*

For more information

Check out the Child Welfare's League of America's National Data Analysis System
http://ndas.cwla.org

Culturally Competent Child Advocacy

In the context of the CASA volunteer role, cultural competence is the ability to work effectively with people from a variety of backgrounds. It entails being aware and respectful of the cultural norms, values, traditions, and parenting styles of those with whom you work. Striving to be culturally competent means cultivating an open mind and new skills and meeting people where they are, rather than making them conform to your standards.

Each child and each family is made up of a combination of cultural, familial, and personal traits. In working with families, you need to learn about an individual's or family's culture. When in doubt, ask the people you are working with. It might feel awkward at first, but learning how to ask questions respectfully is a vital skill to develop as you grow in cultural competence. Once people understand that you sincerely want to learn and be respectful, they are usually very generous with their help.

Developing cultural competence is a lifelong process through which you'll make some mistakes, get to know some wonderful people in deeper ways, and become a more effective CASA volunteer.

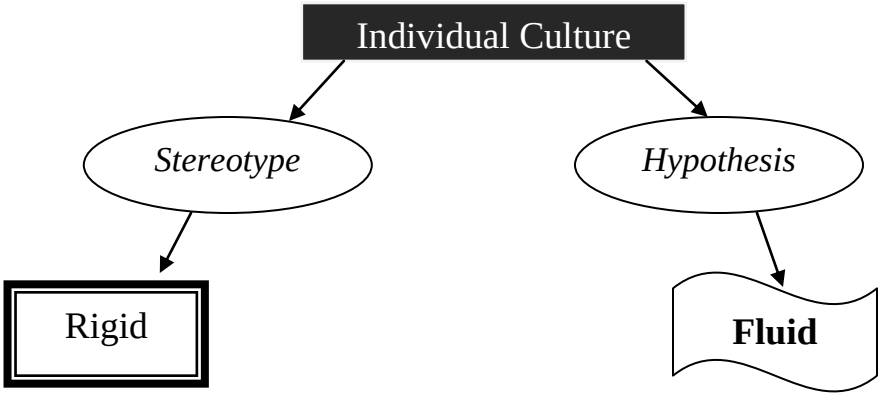
STEREOTYPING vs. CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Stereotypes are rigid and inflexible. Stereotypes hold even when a person is presented with evidence contrary to the stereotype. Stereotypes are harmful because they limit people's potential, perpetuate myths, and are gross generalizations about a particular group. For instance, a person might believe that people who wear large, baggy clothes shoplift. Teenagers wear large, baggy jackets; therefore, teenagers shoplift. Such stereotypes can adversely affect your interactions with children and others in your community. Even stereotypes that include "positive" elements (e.g., "they" are quite industrious) can be harmful because the stereotypes are rigid, limiting, and generalized.

Unlike stereotyping, cultural competence can be compared to making an educated hypothesis. An educated hypothesis contains what you understand about cultural norms and the social, political, and historical experiences of the children and families with whom you work. You might hypothesize, for example, that a Jewish family is not available for a meeting on Yom Kippur, or that they would not want to eat pork. However, you recognize and allow for individual differences in the expression and experience of a culture; for instance, some Jewish people eat pork and still are closely tied to their Jewish faith or heritage.

Another example might be that some African American families celebrate Kwanzaa, while others do not.

As an advocate, it is important to examine your biases and recognize they are based on your own life and do not usually reflect what is true for the stereotyped groups. Everyone has certain biases. Everyone stereotypes from time to time. Developing cultural competence is an ongoing process of recognizing and overcoming these biases by thinking flexibly and finding sources of information about those who are different from you.



Stops the process of inquiry and understanding

Encourages investigation, learning, and understanding

Reflection Questions

- *How might stereotyping or bias result in disproportionality?*

- *How can culturally competent child advocacy help eliminate disproportionality in the system?*

10 Benefits of Practicing Culturally Competent Child Advocacy

1. Ensures that case issues are viewed from the cultural perspective of the child and/or family:

    - Takes into account cultural norms, practices, traditions, intra-familial relationships, roles, kinship ties, and other culturally appropriate values.
    - Advocates for demonstrated sensitivity to this cultural perspective on the part of caseworkers, service providers, caregivers, or others involved with the child and family.

2. Ensures that the child's long-term needs are viewed from a culturally appropriate perspective:

    - Takes into account the child's need to develop and maintain a positive self-image and cultural heritage.
    - Takes into account the child's need to positively identify and interact with others from his/her cultural background.

3. Prevents cultural practices from being mistaken for child maltreatment or family dysfunction.

4. Assists with identifying when parents are truly not complying with a court order and when the problem is culturally inappropriate or non-inclusive service delivery.

5. Contributes to more accurate assessment of the child's welfare, family system, available support systems, placement needs, services needed, and delivery.

6. Decreases cross-cultural communication clashes and opportunities for misunderstandings.

7. Allows the family to utilize culturally appropriate solutions in problem solving.

8. Encourages participation of family members in seeking assistance or support.

9. Recognizes, appreciates, and incorporates cultural differences in ways that promote cooperation.

10. Allows all participants to be heard objectively.

** Adapted from a document created by CASA for Children, Inc., Portland, Oregon*

Activity: Assessing Your Cultural Competence

Place an "X" on each line in the place that best represents you.

I know my own cultural background.

Very Aware **Somewhat Aware** **Need Awareness**

I am aware of many of the cultural influences that have shaped my worldview.

Very Aware **Somewhat Aware** **Need Awareness**

I can describe the influences of culture and cultural identity on children's development**.**

Very Aware **Somewhat Aware** **Need Awareness**

I understand how prejudice and discrimination impact children's development from an early age.

Very Aware **Somewhat Aware** **Need Awareness**

I understand how prejudice and discrimination can impact a family.

Very Aware **Somewhat Aware** **Need Awareness**

I am clear about my own attitudes regarding culture and race and the impact these will have on children in my care.

Very Aware **Somewhat Aware** **Need Awareness**

I know how to provide culturally competent advocacy to the children I serve and culturally competent support to their families.

Very Aware **Somewhat Aware** **Need Awareness**

Section Five Review Questions

- How would you define cultural competence?

- Which three terms from the Cultural Diversity Vocabulary list do you think are valuable for a CASA volunteer to understand?

- What are a few stereotypes that you think you will encounter in your role as a CASA?

Questions for My Coordinator

Cultural Competency Resources

Center for Effective Collaboration & Practice
http://cecp.air.org/cultural/default.htm
It is the mission of the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice to foster the development and the adjustment of children with or at risk of developing serious emotional disturbance. The center's website contains a section on cultural competence.

Class Matters
www.classmatters.org
This website is a great resource for understanding class values and how class influences how people view the world.

Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook
www.peacecorps.gov/wws/publications/culture/index.cfm
This cross-cultural workbook is fully accessible from the Internet and was designed for Peace Corps volunteers, but provides an excellent resource for cross-cultural awareness in America as well as for learning how to interact with people of other cultures in a respectful and successful manner. The workbook contains such chapters as "Understanding Culture," "American Culture and American Diversity," and "Styles of Communication." Each chapter contains many resources.

Flipping the Script: White Privilege & Community Building
www.capd.org/pubfiles/pub-2005-01-01.pdf
The authors of this monograph intend it to "help those involved in improving communities to work in more equitable and thoughtful partnerships with community residents and other stakeholders, with special attention to issues of privilege, oppression, racism and power as they play out in this work."

The Black Database
www.theblackdatabase.com
This website provides links to other sites relevant to African Americans on topics ranging from news, arts, and society to health, education, and technology.

A Practice Guide for Working with African American Families in the Child Welfare System
http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-4702-ENG
Although it is aimed at caseworkers, this article is instructive for CASA/GAL volunteers as they seek to employ a culturally competent, strengths-based approach to working with African American families.

NativeWeb
www.nativeweb.org/resources
This site contains over 3,000 links to various aspects of Native American culture and history.

Asian-Nation
www.asian-nation.org
This site contains multiple resources concerning Asian history, culture, immigration, and contemporary issues in America.

Deaf Linx
www.deaflinx.com
This site provides an extensive list of links to sites about deaf culture, deaf history, deaf businesses, and other general resources for those with hearing loss or those who would like to learn about deaf culture.

National CASA Annotated Bibliography: Resources for Working with LGBTQ Youth & Families in the Foster Care System
www.casanet.org/download/diversity/0612_lgbtq_0032.pdf
This annotated bibliography contains resources to serve the advocacy needs of those working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth and families in foster care. It provides useful information for a range of concerns from health and housing to education and legal representation.

Center for Immigration Studies
www.cis.org
An excellent resource for many current immigrant issues, this site contains informative articles explaining important topics that arise in US immigration and a forum for asking questions about immigration.

Association of Multi-Ethnic Americans (AMEA)
www.ameasite.org
AMEA is an international association of organizations dedicated to advocacy, education, and collaboration on behalf of the multiethnic, multiracial, and trans-racial adoption community.

NOTES PAGE

NOTES PAGE