Working Effectively Across Cultures

Purpose

The purpose of this program is to offer learning to improve cultural competency in order to reduce the risk of providing inappropriate or insensitive services to Medica members.

This program is divided into two parts.

Session one defines the components of cultural competency and offers you an experiential program designed to help you understand what it is like to be in a new and different culture.

Session two provides you with an opportunity to explore various components of cross-cultural awareness, including metaphors for the US American culture, a brainstorm of human differences, and a look at stereotypes. Participants will be equipped with a toolbox of practical cultural competency skills to assist their phone interactions with members.

Objectives

Upon completion of these sessions you will be able to:

• Define cultural competence, the continuum of development and the dimensions of cultural competence.
• Describe different metaphors of understanding the US cultural make-up.
• Describe the business need for a health care organization to develop cultural competency skills.
• Identify the interpersonal skills needed for effective communication across cultures.
• Use the “tool box” of skills to provide better service to all members, especially those from other cultures.
• Use techniques to effectively work with limited English speakers over the phone, including the use of interpreters and the ability to say “Please hold” and “Thank you” in six languages.

WIIFM

Attending this class can help make you more aware of differences when you work with people from different cultural backgrounds. Being more aware of differences can increase your comfort and skill level when interacting with all sorts of people.
Definitions

What is Culture?

“The deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, social hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relationships, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.”

Samovar and Porter: Understanding Intercultural Communication, 2000

What is Cultural Competency?

Cultural competence is a set of attitudes, skills, behaviors and policies that enable organizations and staff to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. For health care professionals, it reflects the ability to acquire and use knowledge of the health-related beliefs, attitudes, practices and communication patterns of members and their families to improve services, strengthen programs, increase community participation, and close the gaps in health status among diverse population groups.
The BaFa BaFa Simulation

Goals

- Create a situation that allows the group to explore and experience the impact that culture has on how people perceive and treat others.
- Create feeling similar to those one would likely have when encountering people from another culture.
- Give participants experience in observing and interacting with a different culture.
- Provide a framework for discussing how people who bring differences can work together effectively.

Outline of Events

1. Participants divide into two cultures: Alpha and Beta.
2. Participants learn and practice their new culture.
3. Each culture selects and instructs an observer.
4. Cultures exchange observers.
5. Observers report back to home culture.
6. Cultures exchange visitors.
7. Visitors report back to their home culture.
8. Simulation ends and we’ll discuss the experience.
Processing BaFa BaFa: Large Group Discussion

A

lphans are (appeared to be): 

How Alphans felt when visiting the Betan culture: 

Alphan culture revealed:

B
etans are (appeared to be): 

How Betans felt when visiting the Alphan culture: 

Betan culture revealed:
Small Group Discussion

1. What was your initial reaction to this simulation?

2. How did you cope when visiting the other culture? What worked? What didn’t work?

3. How did you respond to visitors when they visited your culture?

4. Look at the words on the chart that describe the way Alphans and Betans felt when they visited the other culture. Have you ever felt that way at work or in interactions with members? How did it affect your morale and productivity?
Bafa Bafa Questions for Individual Reflection

1. What insights, thoughts, feelings or learning occur to you as you think about the BaFa BaFa experience?

2. Each person is different in some way from the people with whom he or she works. Identify one of the ways in which you are different. How has it helped you? How has it hurt you?

3. What are some of the disadvantages, frustrations or problems that you have experienced when working with people who are different?

4. What are some of the ways you have benefited from working with people who are different?

5. What are some of the things an individual employee can do to increase or improve upon the benefits that can come to him or her as a result of working with someone who is different? (These benefits were identified in question 4 above.)