

# CULTURAL DIVERSITY

*Each patient, associate and employee is unique; our cultural differences affect our actions.  
At UNITED we strive to show respect through understanding of cultural backgrounds.*

## DEFINITIONS:

<b>Culture</b>	<i>A system of shared values, beliefs, and rituals that are learned and passed on through generations of families and social groups.</i>
<b>Diversity</b>	<i>The condition of being different or having differences.</i>

## CULTURAL AWARENESS AT UNITED

Cultural Awareness at UNITED reflects our values of Accountability, Respect, Innovation, Service and Excellence. Each value supports workplace equality and culturally respectful delivery of service to all customers and health care to patients and their families.

The following self-guided module will educate staff about:

- The meaning of “Cultural Awareness” at UNITED.
- Practices used at UNITED to promote cultural awareness.

The goal of this education is to offer UNITED staff a snapshot of human diversity. It is not intended to provide a procedure, but rather a set of guidelines to alert staff to similarities as well as differences among the groups that make up our customer, patient, and staff populations. Staff are encouraged to use the following educational materials as a starting point to become more “Culturally Aware.”

## WHAT IS “CULTURAL AWARENESS?”

According to the U.S. Census, between the years of 1990 and 2000, minorities accounted for approximately 80 percent of the largest 10-year U.S. population growth in history. This recent growth in the minority population challenges health care establishments across the nation to give culturally competent patient care – care that is respectful of, and attentive to, different cultural norms and expectations. Our goal is to build a workforce that is aware of cultural differences and is also very sensitive to meeting the needs of a diverse customer, patient, and employee population.

### **Cultural Awareness is:**

- *Practicing respect by asking questions about personal preferences.*
- *Striving continually to learn about others and ourselves.*
- *Being willing to learn enough about another person to work comfortably with them.*
- *Incorporating other people’s background, beliefs, and values into the care we provide our patients.*
- *Adjusting your personal style to accommodate other beliefs and values.*

### **Cultural Awareness is not:**

- *Knowing everything there is to know about different cultures throughout the world.*
- *Stereotyping persons that “look” a certain way.*
- *Assuming a person has certain values or beliefs if they belong to a specific ethnic or cultural group.*

## UNITED IS COMMITTED TO CULTURAL AWARENESS and has incorporated the following practices into its culture:

- We are dedicated to supporting and creating a workforce that reflects diversity in culture, race, ethnicity, and gender and are committed to hiring procedures that will achieve equal employment opportunities for all individuals.
- We orient all new employees on sensitivity to other cultures.
- We address cultural sensitivity in the annual performance evaluation.
- We offer tools and resources to assist staff in communications.

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES WITH COMMUNICATION

### *Why Is Communication Important To Cultural Awareness?*

Even when two people speak the same language, communication may be hindered by different values or beliefs. Nonverbal differences or ethnic dialects can also get in the way of mutual understanding.

## SOME COMMUNICATION DIFFERENCES INCLUDE:

### **Conversational Style**

- Be aware that silence may show respect or acknowledgment.
- In some cultures, a direct “No” is considered rude, and silence may mean “No.”
- A loud voice or repeating a statement may mean:
  - anger or simply emphasis.
  - enthusiasm or conviction.
  - a request for help.

### **Personal Space**

- We need to recognize that different cultures have different beliefs about personal space.
- For example, someone may be seen as aggressive for standing “too close” or as “distant” for backing off when approached.
- Be sensitive to someone else’s need for personal space.

### **Eye Contact**

- Different cultures have different beliefs about making direct eye contact.
- Avoiding direct eye contact may be:
  - a sign of respect.
  - an effort to refrain from invading someone’s privacy.
  - an appropriate gender interaction between men and women.
- Don’t assume that differences are negative personality characteristics.

### **Time Orientation**

- In some cultures, life is paced according to “clock time,” which is valued over personal or subjective time.
- In other cultures finishing a conversation, regardless of how long it takes, is more valued than being “on time.”

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY *continued...*

### WHAT DOES CULTURAL AWARENESS LOOK LIKE?

*Here are some examples of how cultural awareness can be shown at UNITED:*

- Taking the time to learn the correct pronunciation of a coworker and patient's name.
- Asking what someone's words really mean before making assumptions.
- Asking if a Vietnamese customer prefers a gentle bow, rather than a handshake.
- Asking before moving religious icons in a patient's room.
- Asking a Muslim woman's preference for a male or female provider.
- Finding out how a deaf customer prefers to communicate.
- Avoiding the use of hand signals such as pointing your finger, since it represents different meanings in different cultures.

### APPEARANCE DOES NOT TELL THE WHOLE STORY!

**Some aspects of a person's background and cultural experience can be identified by appearance:**

- |                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| • Dress              | • Language            |
| • Body posture       | • Physical appearance |
| • Age                | • Gender              |
| • Physical abilities |                       |

**Many other aspects of a person's background and cultural experience are not evident from appearance:**

- |                             |                                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Religion                  | • Beliefs                         |
| • Ethics                    | • Customs                         |
| • Diet needs or preferences | • Family structure                |
| • Sexual identity           | • Preferred health care practices |
| • Physical abilities        |                                   |

*Can you think of other cultural elements?*

### THREE STEPS TO CULTURAL AWARENESS

#### 1 Continual Learning

- Listening with understanding to what people say.
- Explaining or paraphrasing what you hear.
- Acknowledging and respectfully talking about differences.
- Recommending possible options to work together.
- Negotiating mutual agreement.

#### 2 Show Respect

- Recognize that all people have personal differences and individual preferences.
- Know that decisions may be based on family and community influences.
- Learn about the cultural values and beliefs of others.
- Avoid making assumptions about how people look, sound, or act.
- Avoid stereotyping someone because it prevents you from knowing them as an individual.
- Treat others the way they want to be treated.

#### 3 Take Action

**Seek to Understand:**

- Find common understanding or experience.

**Cooperate:**

- Give and ask for feedback.
- Ask questions to learn about people's preferences.
- Partner with your coworkers, your customers, and our patients and their families to bridge cultural gaps.

### SUMMARY

*Each one of us can make a difference at UNITED by consistently showing respect for other cultures through understanding, and utilizing the available tools and resources in our interactions with those of different cultural backgrounds.*