

CHAPTER 10
CULTURAL COMPETENCY
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CHAPTER 10
CULTURAL COMPETENCY

1. INTRODUCTION.

- a. The Department recognizes the importance of understanding and respecting the diversity of cultures, social groups, and individuals, within the Department and across the state's population.
- b. The Department is committed to creating and maintaining a work environment that supports employees' development of cultural competence in order to provide the highest level of service to the people of the State of California.
- c. To achieve this commitment, the Department, in conjunction with the Museum of Tolerance, has developed and maintains trainings and material to promote and support a high-performing workforce that delivers culturally responsive services, and reflects the diversity of the communities it serves.
- d. The Department will continue to implement and support training and activities which promote understanding, awareness, and enhance the cultural competence of its personnel.
- e. As the Office of Primary Interest (OPI), the Equal Opportunity & Access Section (EOAS) oversees the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Program. The EOAS may be contacted by departmental employees for questions or assistance.

2. POLICY.

- a. It is the policy of the Department to treat employees, applicants, and the public it serves with respect and fairness, to ensure its practices are ethical, and to ensure equitable treatment for all. These organizational values are the foundation of cultural competency.
- b. Cultural competency trainings include specific curriculum to provide employees with strategies for successful contacts with diverse cultures, social groups, and individuals. Trainings focus on developing knowledge, skills, and awareness with a view that cultural competence is an ongoing learning process.
- c. The Department provides regular and periodic trainings which exceed the required training intervals established by the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). The EOAS is responsible for identifying,

coordinating, and/or developing training and resources regarding cultural competency topics.

3. DEFINITIONS.

a. Accessibility. The design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services to allow everyone, including persons with disabilities, to access them fully and independently. Accessibility includes the provision of accommodations and modifications to ensure equal access to employment and participation in activities for persons with disabilities, and the reduction or elimination of physical and attitudinal barriers to equitable opportunities.

b. Bias. The California Department of Justice defines bias as the disproportionate favor for or against something that is not rooted in fact. People may be biased toward other people who have experiences or perceived traits similar to them and may be biased toward people who do not. There are two types of biases:

(1) Explicit Bias. Conscious thoughts and feelings that influence perceptions, decisions, and actions. The individual is clear about their feelings and related behaviors are conducted with intent.

(2) Implicit Bias. Unconscious thoughts and feelings about people that may influence actions outside of the individual's awareness.

c. Culture. A broadly used term that refers to a complex group of shared characteristics including beliefs, values, ways of thinking, behaviors, customs, or traditions. Culture is learned and can be passed from one generation to the next. It can condition an individual's thinking and influence both conscious and unconscious behaviors.

d. Cultural Competency. It is a set of demonstratable characteristics and skills, that enable and improve, on a continuous basis, an individual's ability to understand, appreciate, communicate, and effectively interact with people across cultures whose belief systems and values may differ from one's own, with dignity and respect.

e. Cultural Diversity. Refers to the presence of various cultural groups within a society, each with its distinct beliefs, practices, languages, and traditions. In the context of departmental operations, cultural diversity recognizes that all personnel interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds, including different ethnicities, religions, and social norms.

f. Diversity. A workforce that encompasses a broad range of backgrounds, skill sets, life experiences, and perspectives. This includes diversity in age, culture, cultural exposure, disability, economics, education, ethnicity, family history and/or circumstances, gender, gender expression, gender identity, language proficiencies, military service, national origin, prior work experience, race, religion, sexual orientation, talents, training, and volunteerism.

g. Equity. An organizational cultural commitment that all employees will be treated fairly and given equal access to opportunities and resources and feel fully engaged to contribute to the Department's mission and strategic plan.

h. Inclusion. Inclusion is the achievement of a work environment in which all individuals have a sense of belonging and are respected and valued for their differences and uniqueness and allowing everyone the opportunity to succeed. Inclusion is the intentional behaviors and organizational norms that embrace the diversity that exists. It involves seeing, hearing, and valuing the unique perspectives and ideas of all.

4. DEVELOPING CULTURAL COMPETENCY.

a. Developing cultural competency is a dynamic and complex process that involves an ongoing critical examination of one's attitudes, knowledge, and skills. It requires continuous cultural education, and openness to others' values and beliefs, in order to negotiate cross-cultural differences to complete tasks and/or create positive living, learning, and working environments.

b. Cultural competence improves interactions with people of various cultures, improves both individual and community safety, enhances trust and confidence among communities, and reduces confrontation. In the workplace, cultural competence may result in an improved quality of decision making, job efficiency, and performance. Through a series of learned skills and strategies to develop cultural competency, employees should consistently demonstrate:

- (1) Inclusiveness and neutrality in decision-making.
- (2) Emotional intelligence
- (3) Knowledge of diverse cultural beliefs, views, and practices.
- (4) Cross-cultural communication skills.

5. COMPONENTS OF CULTURAL COMPETENCY. Components of cultural competency training include:

- a. Understanding Culture. Cultural competency begins with a basic understanding of culture itself. Developing knowledge about cultural norms, values, and behaviors that shape people's lives can assist in recognizing and appreciating diversity.
 - b. Effective Communication. Developing skills to communicate across cultural boundaries, including understanding non-verbal cues, recognizing linguistic differences, and adapting communication styles to connect with diverse communities.
 - c. Reducing Bias. Cultural competency training aims to reduce biases and stereotypes. Developing skills to recognize personal biases and understanding how they might impact interactions with individuals from different backgrounds.
 - d. Community Engagement. Culturally competent personnel actively engage with their communities, building trust by participating in community events, understanding local customs, and addressing community-specific concerns.
 - e. Legal and Ethical Considerations. Cultural competency extends to legal and ethical aspects. Employees learn about cultural rights, religious practices, and how to balance cultural sensitivity with enforcement contacts.
 - f. Conflict Resolution. Acquiring and building skills to resolve conflicts arising from cultural misunderstandings. This includes de-escalation techniques and promoting mutual understanding.
 - g. Awareness of Social Issues. Cultural competency training includes learning to recognize and understand social issues and ensure interactions are appropriate in the work environment and during public contacts.
6. DOCUMENTATION. All cultural competency training shall be recorded by the command's Employee Training Records System (ETRS) coordinator, under the appropriate training title on the employee's appropriate ETRS screen.