Cultural Diversity and Awareness
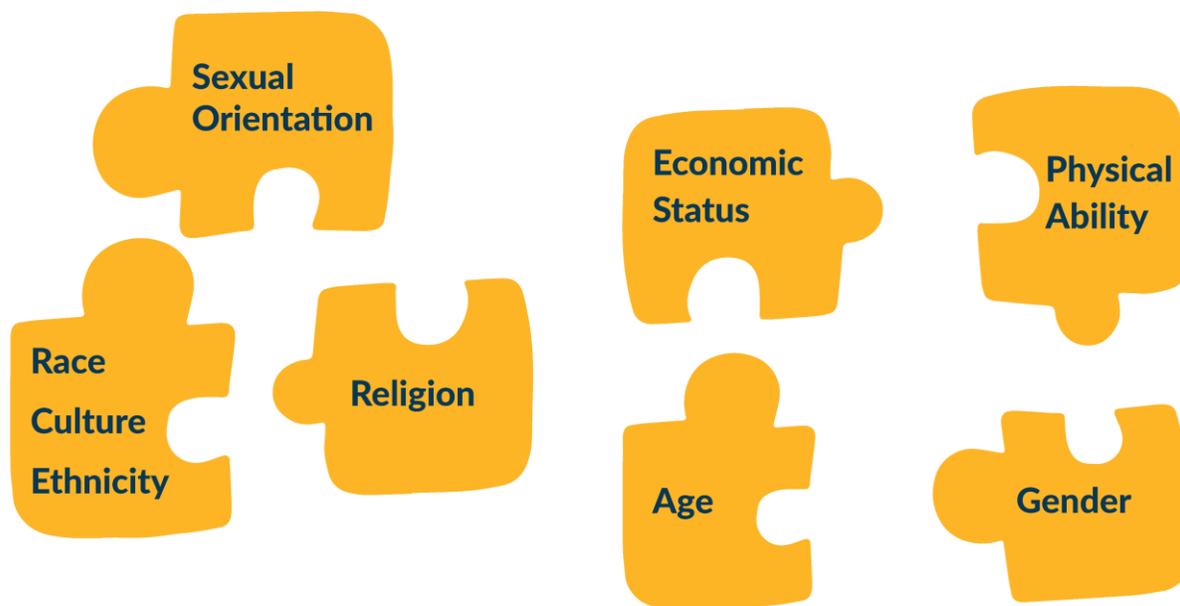
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What is Diversity?

Diversity represents a variety of dimensions from personality and work style, to social and cultural identities. At Beacon, we recognize differences, accept them, and allow them to change our perceptions.

For many people, the idea of addressing diversity means addressing race, ethnicity, and gender. However, there are a great deal more dimensions of diversity that play an important role in how we see ourselves and one another.

This includes, but is not limited to:

Sexual Orientation

Economic Status

Physical Ability

Race Culture Ethnicity

Religion

Age

Gender

Understanding Diversity in the Workplace

Dimensions of diversity in the workplace also include things like:

- Big Picture Thinkers and Detail Orientation Thinkers

- Introverts and Extroverts

- Liberals and Conservatives

- Assertive and Passive

- Spontaneous and Cautious
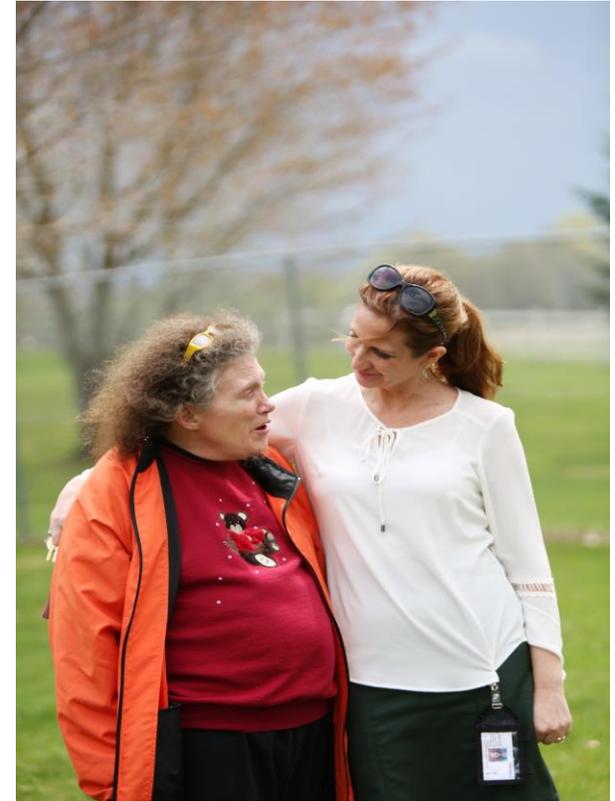
Understanding Diversity

- Seniority, experience, position level, education, and training are also aspects of diversity that impact our workplace and resident/provider relationships.

- The key to understanding diversity is educating ourselves on ways to work together effectively with those who may have different perspectives than our own.

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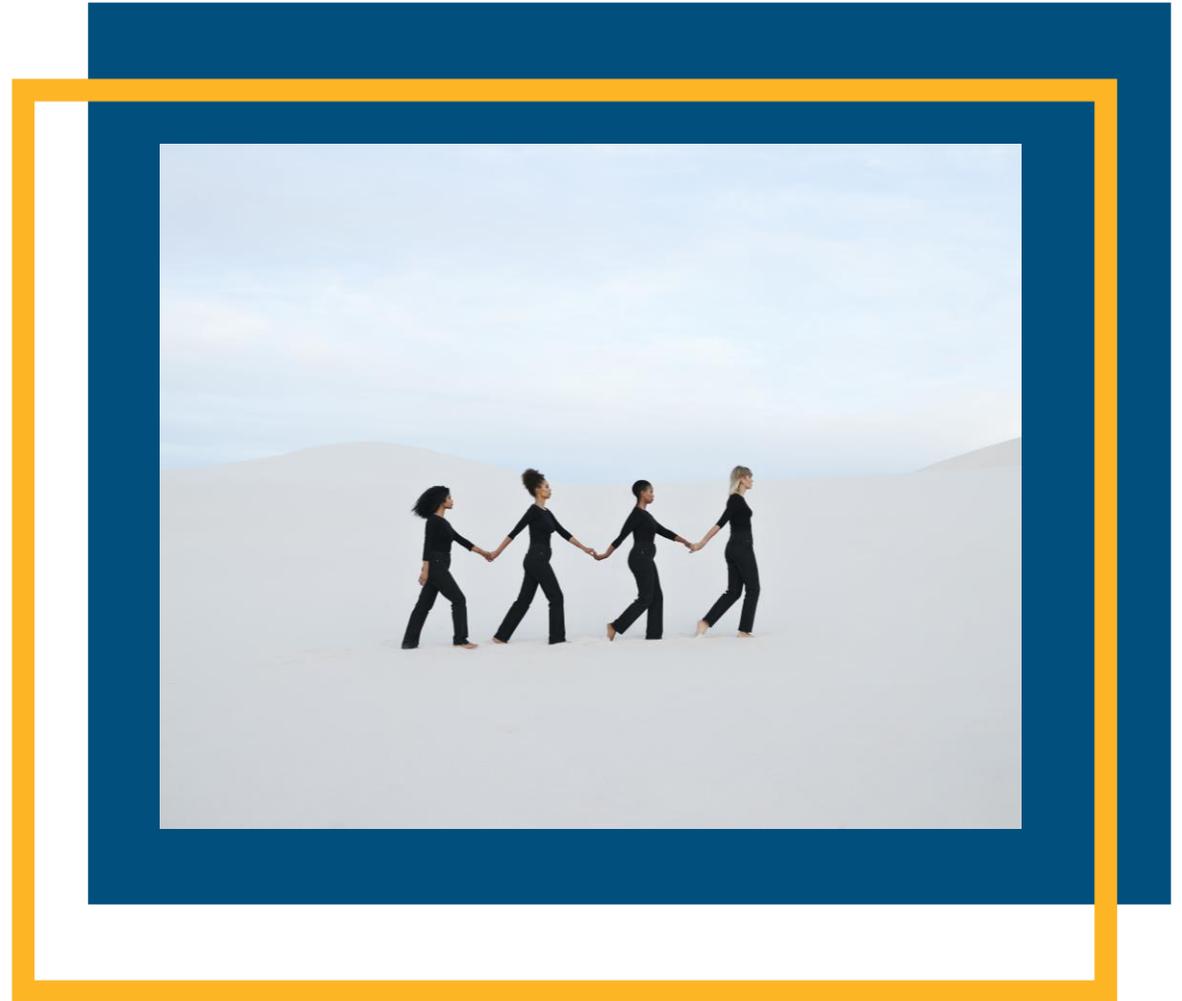
Stereotypes

Stereotypes effect what we think and feel about people who are different from ourselves.

- Some of the messages we receive and retain about people who are different from us are based on misinformation.

- Stereotyping is commonplace. We all do it. It helps us organize our thinking and manage massive amounts of information. Once in place, stereotypes are difficult to undo.

- To help us move away from stereotypes or automatic responses and begin to value differences, we need to develop awareness of our automatic responses.

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Implicit Bias

When we have attitudes towards people or associate sterotypes with them without our conscious knowledge that is implicit bias.

- Thoughts and feelings are implicit if we are unaware of them or mistaken about their nature. We have a bias when, rather than being neutral, we prefer (or aversion to) a person or group of people.

- Implicit bias is a universal phenomenon, not limited by race, gender, or even country of origin.

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Implicit Bias

**How to "debias" ourselves?**

Instituting specific procedures of decision making and encouraging people to be mindful of the risks of implicit bias can help us avoid acting according to biases that are contrary to our conscious values and beliefs.

What is Culture?

Culture is a similarity in expectations and view of life. It is similar shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices. Culture serves as a road map for both perceiving and interacting with the world. Culture contributes to a community or group building a sense of local identity and solidarity.

Within a nation, race or community, people belong to multiple cultural groups and negotiate multiple cultural expectations daily. These contribute to the development of our beliefs and values.

This includes, but is not limited to:

Language

Values

Symbols

Traditions

Beliefs

Norms

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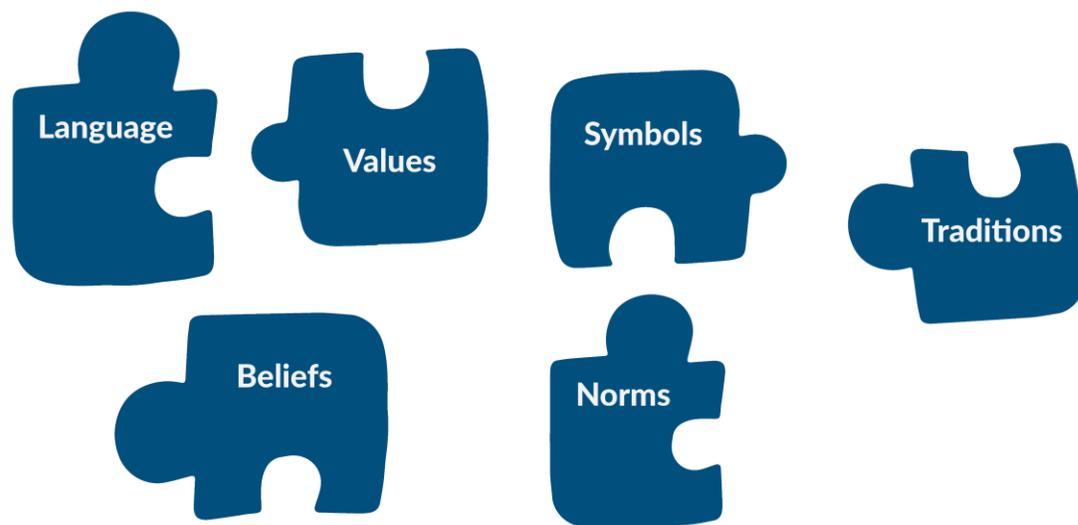
What is Cultural Competence?

Cultural competence reinforces the values of diversity, flexibility, and responsiveness in addressing current and changing needs of residents and communities

Cultural competence requires:

1. Self evaluation;

2. Learn about your residents and their interests;

3. Awareness of one's own assumptions and biases; and

4. Understanding how these assumptions effect one's ability to work with team members, residents, and outside agencies.

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Culturally Responsive Skills

Being culturally competent and/or proficient is a continual process.

Curiosity, empathy, respect, and humility are some basic attitudes that foster positive relationships with coworkers, residents, and outside agencies.

At Beacon, we hold in our ICARE values and demonstrate in our behavior, attitudes, policies, and structures the ability for our staff to work effectively cross-culturally.

- Acknowledge cultural/generational differences and historical injustices without becoming defensive.

- Respect others' opinions.

- Be open to learning about other cultures and ideas.

- Adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of communities we serve.

- Don't stereotype.

- Don't judge others by your own cultural standards.

- Don't assume your culture's way is the only way.

- Don't talk down to anyone; communicate effectively.

Foster Awareness

- By understanding the effect that historic distrust has on present-day interactions.

- Recognize differences as diversity rather than abnormal behavior or inappropriate responses to the environment.

- Respect the benefits of diverse values and behaviors to people and the organization.

- Acknowledge your own ethnocentricity—the ways in which you stereotype, judge, and discriminate, and your emotional reactions to conflicting cultural values.

- Know the similarities that are shared across the human culture, regardless of the differences that exist among individual cultures and groups

We All Desire

- Good Health
- Safety
- Love and Belongingness
- Self-Esteem/Feeling of Worth
- Education and Wellbeing
- Ability to Pursue Potential

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Effective Communication

To understand another person's diverse point of view or culture and to share our own views requires communication skills.

- **Communication Style -** Openness, active listening, and respectful language.

- **Think before you speak**–Be sensitive to others. If you do accidentally offend someone, apologize immediately.

- **Listen more**–People who are listened to usually appreciate the person who is doing the listening and are more likely to cooperate with the person.

- **Be alert to non-verbal cues**–Remember, body language impacts a great deal of how we communicate. By developing your awareness of the signs and signals of body language, you can more easily understand other people, and more effectively communicate with them.

- **Avoid generalized language**–Refrain from using words, images, and situations that suggest that all or most members of a particular group are the same. You can avoid stereotyping by asking questions to understand each person better.

- **Be careful with humor-**Even if you don't intend to hurt others, your comment or behavior may be interpreted in a way you didn't intend –apologize and clear up any misunderstanding. At the same time, recognize other people's intentions when they speak. We wouldn't feel so threatened by diversity if we allowed ourselves to chuckle at our own –and others' –shortcomings.

Value Differences

Integrate Not Assimilate

We do not assume that an individual person represents or embodies any group. Diversity is about allowing and respecting differences until the differences are valued and respected.

At Beacon, valuing the differences of those around you helps eliminate discriminatory practices, improves staff morale, reduces stress-related illnesses, and enchances performance by using different perspectives. Every individual has the reight to receive culturally proficient services.

Impact

Help make an impact by moving to a deeper understanding of people and embracing them rather than trying to change them

As providers, we have long been aware on the impacts of bias, prejudice, and social determinants of health on our customers and work to facilitate access to health care, education, and safe housing despite the barriers they have faced as people with mental illnesses or disabilities.

Our residents and potential residents deal with stigma and bais against persons with disabilities and/or mental illness, as well as prejudices against any other groups to which they belong.

Every individual has the right to receive culturally proficient servies.

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Spotlighting Under-Served Communities

Factors affecting access to treatment may include:

- Lack of insurance
- Mental illness stigma
- Lack of diversity among mental health care providers
- Lack of culturally competent providers
- Language barriers
- Distruct in the health care system
- Inadequate support for mental health service in safety net settings (uninsured, Medicaid, Health Insurance coverage, etc)

Racial/ethnic, gender, and sexual minorities often suffer from poor mental health outcomes due to multiple factors, including inaccessibility of high-quality mental health care services, cultural stigma surrounding mental health care, discrimination, and overall lack of awareness about mental health.

Lack of cultural understanding by health care providers may contribute to underdiagnosis and/or misdiagnosis of mental illness in people from racially/ethnically diverse populations. Factors that contribute to these kinds of misdiagnoses include language differences between patient and provider, stigma of mental illness among minority groups, and cultural presentation of symptoms.

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Other Important Terms

Disparity –A measured difference between groups. Disparities exist and are associated with worse health outcomes and shorter life spans.

Inequity -Measurable differences between different population groups arising from social conditions that are avoidable and unjust.

Inclusion -The action or state of including or of being included within a community. Inclusion involves a sense of belonging and empowered participation.

Health Equity -The state in which everyone can attain full health, and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this because of social position or any socially defined circumstance like socioeconomic status, neighborhood they live in, race, disability status, or educational attainment.

Racism -The concept of racism is widely thought of as simply personal prejudice, but, in fact, it is a complex system of racial hierarchies and inequities. Beyond the individual level of racism, we consider the broader more societal concepts of institutional and structural racism.

Anti-Racism - Working to become actively conscious about race and racism *and* take actions to end racial inequities in our daily lives. Being antiracist is believing that racism is everyone's problem, and we all have a role to play in stopping it.

Social Determinants of Health - Conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. Resources that enhance quality of life can have a significant influence on population health outcomes. Examples of these resources include safe and affordable housing, access to education, public safety, availability of healthy foods, local emergency/health services, and environments free of life-threatening toxins.

Resources

"Criteria for the Demonstration Program to Improve Community Mental Health Centers and to Establish Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics." *CCBHC-Criteria-Updated*, Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Agency, www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/ccbhc-criteria.pdf.

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Mental Health Disparities: Diverse Populations, American Psychiatric Association, www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/cultural-competency/education/mental-health-facts.

Van Buren Community Mental Health, 14 Apr. 2020, vbcmh.com/.

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