



Association of Social Work Boards

ACE Resource

Cultural Competence and Diversity in Social Work Continuing Education

The following terms are found throughout the ACE Application and ACE Provider Guidelines and in the **Explanation of Terms** within the ACE Provider Guidelines. These statements reflect the values of the social work profession and ACE standards.

Core values of social work The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values are:

- Service
- Social Justice
- Dignity and worth of the person
- Importance of human relationships
- Integrity
- Competence
- Ethical conduct

Cultural Competence: Cultural competence refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each (NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice).

Cultural competence in social work continuing education implies a heightened consciousness of how people experience their uniqueness, implement that awareness within practice, and deal with their differences and similarities within a larger social context.

Continuing education courses may reflect:

- Understanding of diversity between and within cultures
- Consciousness of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact
- Understanding of how personal and professional values may conflict with or accommodate the needs of diverse clients
- Understanding of history, traditions, values, family systems and artistic expressions of diverse cultural groups
- Methodological approaches, skills and techniques reflecting understanding of the role of culture in CE course content
- Information in language appropriate to participants

ACE providers should enlist the social worker consultant to assist the organization in infusing cultural competence throughout courses and the overall program through activities and processes related to the following categories.

- Awareness: Consciousness of one's personal reactions to people and situations that are different

- Attitude: Expression of one’s beliefs and values related to culture and cultural differences
- Knowledge: Information contributing to self-awareness and improving cross-cultural effectiveness
- Skills: Specific strategies and behaviors, including both verbal and non-verbal communication, which contribute to the creation of inclusive systems and allow members to work at maximum productivity levels

Diversity Differences in and among societal groups based on race and/or ethnicity, gender, age, physical/mental abilities, sexual orientation, religion, size and other distinguishing characteristics. In social organizations the term usually refers to the range of people who more accurately represent minority populations and people from varied backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities and viewpoints.

For additional information, see “NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice”, National Association of Social Workers <http://www.socialworkers.org>