



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FOR FOSTER CARE
& PERMANENCY PLANNING**

at the Hunter College
School of Social Work

INFORMATION PACKET:
*Cultural Sensitivity With Immigrant
Families and Their Children*

By Inga Feldman

April 2003

129 East 79th Street • New York, NY 10021
TEL 212/452-7053 • FAX 212/452-7051
www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp

A service of the
Children's Bureau/ACF/DHHS

INFORMATION PACKET

Cultural Sensitivity with Immigrant Families and Their Children.

Prepared by Inga Feldman, MSW Graduate Student, HCSSW

SUMMARY

Taken From: Reducing Risk for Children in Changing Cultural Contexts: Recommendations for Intervention and Training. Strier D. Roer, Mt. Scopus Hebrew University, School of Social Work.

“Children of families in changing cultural contexts are often considered to be at risk for maltreatment. This is because such families may experience sociocultural and socioeconomic change and a loss of their former support networks. Parental acculturation stress and related dysfunction might also affect children. The risk increases when children are exposed to systems with conflicting socialization goals and with contradictory definitions of desirable child-care or supervision frameworks.

Conflicts and clashes between parents and socializing agents have been found to have long-term detrimental effects on children and families. Cultural differences may also result in misinterpretation of parental behaviors and misdiagnosis of abuse and neglect. Such conflicts and misinterpretations can be avoided if both parents and social agents learn to understand and to respect their cultural differences, so that together, they can devise ways to bridge them.”

In this information Packet on Cultural Sensitivity with Immigrant Families and Their Children you will find:

- Fact Sheets
- Best Practice Tips
- Defining Terms
- Model Programs and Websites
- References & Suggested Readings

Cultural Sensitivity with Immigrant Families and Their Children

Fact Sheets

Taken From: National CASA's Volunteer Training Curriculum.
<http://www.casanet.org/program-management/diversity/cultural-child.htm>

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHILD REARING

Conventional wisdom might lead one to believe that child abuse and neglect would be easily identified regardless of cultural boundaries. As one begins to explore the considerable variation in child rearing beliefs and behaviors cross-culturally, however, it becomes clear that there is not a universal standard for child rearing, nor for child abuse and neglect. This presents a dilemma. If we fail to allow for a cultural perspective in defining child abuse and neglect, we find ourselves in the position in which our own set of cultural beliefs and practices are presumed to be preferable, and in fact superior, to another. At the same time, we cannot take the stance of accepting inhumane treatment of children in the name of cultural sensitivity.

Culture, no matter whose it is, is never an excuse for hurting children, and virtually all cultures have as a value that children may not be damaged. In every culture, members of the community have a responsibility to intervene when children are being hurt -- that's clear. However, what behavior we label as abusive or neglectful, how we go about intervening, how we understand the causes of problems, and what we do to help alleviate the stresses, have much to do with our understanding of the family's culture and what is normal or acceptable within that culture.

Western cultures consider, for example, the harsh initiation rites that occur in other parts of the world as abusive. During such rites, pre-adolescent boys may undergo genital operations, facial scarring, beatings, and hazing by older members of the group. Sharp reeds are used to induce bleeding of the tongue, nostrils, or urethra. They sometimes are deprived of food or forced to vomit by inverting long canes down their throats.

At the same time, many Western child rearing practices would be viewed as equally abusive or neglectful by these same groups. Practices such as isolating children in beds or rooms of their own at night, making children wait for food when they are hungry, forcing young children to sit in a classroom all day, or allowing infants to "cry themselves out" would seem bizarre, exotic, and damaging as their behaviors seem to us.

Misinterpretation of physical trauma frequently results in inappropriate intervention by authorities. Consider the following case:

It was reported to Child Protective Services that a mother had cut the faces of her two young sons with a razor blade and rubbed charcoal into the lacerations. The boys were removed from her care and placed into foster care. She was prosecuted for child abuse. However, the mother was a member of an East African tribe that traditionally practices facial scarring. Her actions were simply an attempt to assert the cultural identity of her children. Without such markings, her boys would be unable to participate as adults in their culture. A failure to assure one's children of such scars would thus be viewed as neglectful or abusive within the cultural context of her tribe.

Another example often misunderstood is the Vietnamese practice of "coin rubbing" in which heated metal coins are pressed forcefully on the child's body leaving bruises. This practice is a traditional curing technique that is believed to reduce fevers, chills, and headaches. While bruises are indeed inflicted, in this context it can hardly be defined as child abuse.

From these examples, we can see that it is difficult to compare diverse practices taken out of their cultural contexts. How would we explain to the East African mother or the Vietnamese that their traditions are abusive while orthodontic work, for example, in our culture is not only acceptable but often desirable? All these practices inflict pain on the child. However, viewed within their cultural contexts, they are practices aimed at benefiting the child by making him or her physically acceptable to other members of the culture.

Cultural Sensitivity with Immigrant Families and Their Children **Best Practice Tips**

Taken From: *Promoting a Climate of Cultural Sensitivity, Understanding and Mutual Respect.*

http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/guardianship/protection_practice_manuals/ps9.html

Promoting a climate of cultural sensitivity, understanding and mutual respect includes:

- Being respectful of the child's cultural heritage, racial ancestry and identity, and spiritual or religious faith.
- Involving the child's family, including the extended family whenever possible, in the planning and delivery of services for the child.
- Ensuring that services for the child are planned and provided in ways that are sensitive to the needs and the cultural, racial and religious heritage of the child and the child's family.
- Ensuring that the child receives the religious instruction and participates in the religious activities of his or her choice, as well as helping the child's family to accept the child's right to make these choices when there is conflict or misunderstanding.
- Using the services of a language and/or cultural interpreter to assist in assessment, planning and service delivery, when necessary and appropriate
- Involving the child's cultural or ethnic community, whenever possible, in the planning and delivery of services for the child.
- Providing the child with consistent and regular opportunities, guidance and encouragement to maintain his or her cultural heritage and identity.

Cultural Sensitivity with Immigrant Families and Their Children

Best Practice Tips

- Ensuring that the child receives the best possible care according to community standards and at the same level as other children in the placement.
- Ensuring that the child has full access to services in which he or she is entitled, and is not denied access on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, culture, ethnicity, religion or race.

Ensuring the preservation of the child's unique cultural identity:

The most effective way to ensure the preservation of the child's unique cultural identity is to comply with provisions in section 71(3) of the Child, Family and Community Service Act. Section 71(3) requires that priority be given to placing the child with the child's extended family, within the child's aboriginal community, or with another aboriginal family if the child's own family or community cannot assume the child's care. Involving the child's aboriginal community is an equally important step in respecting the child's aboriginal ancestry and in safeguarding the child's unique cultural identity.

Involving the child's aboriginal community includes developing a plan with the designated representative that sets out:

- the steps that will be taken to ensure participation of the aboriginal community in the development, implementation and review of the child's comprehensive plan of care.
- the identification and involvement of someone from the child's aboriginal community or cultural group to be the child's cultural contact or mentor.

ways in which the child's participation in culturally specific activities, including traditional customs and cultural activities that are unique to the community, will be ensured.

Cultural Sensitivity with Immigrant Families and Their Children

Best Practice Tips

- the steps that will be taken to facilitate the child's involvement in the aboriginal community's oral history (story telling), language, songs, dances, ceremonial activities, arts and crafts, or sports events and activities.

Additional steps to support implementation of the plan to preserve the child's cultural identity

- Once a plan to preserve the child's cultural identity is developed with the aboriginal community and/or designated representative, ensure that it is part of the child's comprehensive plan of care.
- When a caregiver has been identified for the child, involve the caregiver and the child in case conferences with the aboriginal community and/or designated representative.
- Seek out cultural centres where traditional culture and languages are accessible through the elders or through youth cultural workers and that, in some communities, incorporate museums, historical research, traditional healing, and counselling.
- In communities that do not have cultural centres, verify whether there is cultural programming by community members or through the Tribal Council at locations such as the school, band office, community hall, longhouse or friendship centre.
- When ongoing contact with the child's aboriginal community is not possible, arrange to have the aboriginal community's newsletter or newspaper sent to the caregiver.

Cultural Sensitivity with Immigrant Families and Their Children *Defining Terms*

Defining Terms

The term cultural competence refers to the ability of organizations and systems to function and perform effectively in cross cultural situations(Cross 1989; Kunisawa 1988; Sue et al., 1992).

CULTURALLY COMPETENT AGENCIES AND SYSTEMS understand, accept and respect cultural differences. They involve people who are reflective of the diverse groups in the community -- in the development of policies, services and programs which are appropriate and relevant to them. A culturally competent organization respects differences and pays attention to the dynamics of difference. They do continuous self-assessment, expand cultural knowledge and resources, and adapt their service models to accommodate needs. Such organizations consult with ethno-cultural communities and are committed to hiring culturally competent employees. They also understand the interplay and influence between policy and practice. (Cross 1989.)

ETHNOCULTURAL DIVERSITY: Refers to the unique characteristics that all of us possess that distinguish us as individuals and identify us as belonging to a group or groups. Diversity transcends concepts of race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation and disability. Diversity offers strength and richness to the whole. (Hastings Institute)

ETHNOCENTRISM: The tendency to judge all other cultures by the norms and standards of one's own culture. (Towards Full Inclusion Gaining the Diversity Advantage by Canadian Heritage - Dec 93).

Cultural Sensitivity with Immigrant Families and Their Children

Defining Terms

A condition characterized by pre-occupation with one's own cultural or national group and belief in its superiority over others. (CODE 1996 Celebrating the Mosaic: A handbook and guide to resources for multicultural education.)

INCLUSIVENESS: refers to an organizational system where decision-making includes perspectives from diverse points of views, from within and without the organization, where appropriate (Hastings Institute, with reference to Byron Kunisawa and Websters New Collegiate).

Inclusiveness of services refers to the right of every individual and groups to equal opportunity, equal access, equal participation in all that society has to offer regardless of age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, income, gender or religious differences. (Social Planning, City of Vancouver)

Equitable participation in a public or community institution of all members of the community, as service recipients, stakeholder or employees (as appropriate) (Towards Full Inclusion Gaining the Diversity Advantage by Canadian Heritage - Dec 93).

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY: Describes approaches to achieving equal access to employment for all groups in Canada. The primary focus of employment equity is the prevention, identification and removal of discriminatory barriers in an organization's hiring, training, promotion and income policies and practices. (Institute for Managing Diversity)

REFLECTIVE: To give back, or exhibit an image, likeness or outline. (Websters New Collegiate)

ORGANIZATIONAL REFLECTIVENESS: That people can see themselves in staff at all levels, services, environment, programs, decision making structure, and values. The organization mirrors the community.

Cultural Sensitivity with Immigrant Families and Their Children **Model Programs and Web Resources**

*Taken from: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information- <http://www.calib.com>*

Alliance for Children and Families

11700 West Lake Park Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53224-3099 Phone: (414) 359-1040
Fax: (414) 359-1074
E-mail: info@alliance1.org
URL: <http://www.alliance1.org>

The Alliance is an association representing private, nonprofit child and family service organizations. Its members provide an array of services ranging from residential care to domestic abuse prevention and intervention. The mission of the Alliance is to strengthen the ability of its members to serve and advocate for children, families, and communities. The Alliance was formed by a merger between Family Service America and the National Association of Homes and Services for Children in 1998.

American Humane Association (AHA)

Child Welfare Division

63 Inverness Dr. East
Englewood, CO 80112-5117 Phone: (303) 792-9900
Fax: (303) 792-5333
Toll-Free: (866) 242-1877
E-mail: children@americanhumane.org
URL: <http://www.americanhumane.org>

The American Humane Association's mission is preventing cruelty, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children and animals. AHA's Child Welfare Division has worked for many years to improve the public and private child welfare systems so they can respond more effectively to the needs of abused and neglected children. AHA is a national association of child protection programs, agencies, and individuals, and its membership includes State and local social service agencies, child advocates, courts, hospitals, schools, mental health professionals, and concerned citizens in every State. AHA information assists professionals and citizens in making informed decisions about how to help children and families in crisis. The association also develops resources and programs which help communities and citizens prevent child abuse.

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)

Headquarters

440 First Street NW
Third Floor
Washington, DC 20001-2085 Phone: (202) 638-2952
Fax: (202) 638-4004
E-mail: webweaver@cwla.org
URL: <http://www.cwla.org/>

The Child Welfare League of America is the oldest national organization serving vulnerable children, youth, and their families. CWLA provides training, consultation, and technical assistance to child welfare professionals and agencies while also educating the public on emerging issues that affect abused, neglected, and at-risk children. Through its publications, conferences, and teleconferences, CWLA shares information on emerging trends, specific topics in child welfare practice (family foster care, kinship care, adoption, positive youth development), and Federal and State policies.

Kempe Children's Center

1825 Marion Street
Denver, CO 80218 Phone: (303) 864-5252
E-mail: kempe@kempecenter.org
URL: <http://www.kempecenter.org>

The Kempe Children's Center is a clinically based resource providing training, consultation, program development and evaluation, and research in child abuse and neglect. The Center is committed to multidisciplinary approaches to the prevention, identification, and treatment of all forms of abuse and neglect.

National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment (NRCCM)

P.O. Box 441470
Aurora, CO 80044-1470 Phone: (303) 369-8008
Fax: (303) 369-8009
E-mail: NRCCM@gocwi.org
URL: <http://www.gocwi.org/nrccm/>

The National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment, a service of the Children's Bureau, assists States, Tribes and local CPS agencies to achieve the goals of safety, permanency and well-being for the families they serve. NRCCM provides training and technical assistance for the purpose of building capacity for developing, expanding, strengthening, and improving service delivery to children and their families. The Center also conducts needs assessments, provides on-site technical assistance, identifies and disseminates best practice approaches, provides specialized training, evaluates programs and program components, and coordinates and collaborates with other National Resource Centers and agencies.

Cultural Sensitivity with Immigrant Families and Their Children ***Review of Policies and Procedures***

Taken From: National Resource Center for Respite and Crises Care Services.

Organizational Structure, Policies and Procedures

Attitudes, policies, and practices of an agency must establish the guidelines that emphasize culturally responsive behaviors in the workplace. The paradigm shift from ethnocentrism to multiculturalism in respite and crisis care services, and any of the other family care services, can only be accomplished when cultural responsiveness is considered one of the primary goals of the entire agency. A continuous examination process for bias in policies, practices, and personal philosophies is required to implement and sustain culturally relevant program efforts.

Cultural responsiveness enhancements to the organizational structure include the following:

- Hiring and utilizing staff of color as "cultural consultants."
- Including cultural responsiveness as a job requirement and establishing clear expectations/guidelines for workers regarding cultural sensitivity and responsiveness in both the workplace and the field.
- Reviewing forms and processes with special attention to data, documentation, and procedures that lend themselves to cultural bias, stereotypes, and stigmatizing.
- Establishing procedures for monitoring, evaluating, and addressing diversity issues in the organization and in service delivery.
- Requiring cultural responsiveness training for all employees, not just new employees and front line workers.
- Establishing supervisory responsibilities and staff job expectations related to cultural responsiveness in service delivery and workplace interactions.

Agency Training Curricula

Cultural responsiveness training should be interwoven into the entire fabric of the agency/organization if its importance is to be understood and its far reaching impacts appreciated. Training must include a focus on building skills that aid in differentiating the limitations in family functioning that may be caused by poverty, the environment, and/or culture from those due to unhealthy family conditions or behaviors. Recommendations for cultural responsiveness training include the following:

- Listing cultural responsiveness as an expectation of trainers.

- Providing more details and practice opportunities for cross-cultural communication and ethnographic interviewing techniques.
- Stressing cultural self-assessment for trainees as a cultural responsiveness tool.
- Discussion/information sharing on additional impacts of regional culture, the culture of economics, and the drug culture on assessment factors, case planning and case management issues .
- Presenting cultural sensitivity and dynamics of diversity as not only best practice but also as a personal enrichment activity.
- Highlighting community-based resources as reliable contacts for culture specific information and services.
- Providing examples of culturally diverse families in case scenarios, video presentations, and other related audio-visual training aids.
- Acting immediately to confront culturally insensitive statements/behaviors in the training session.

Cultural Sensitivity with Immigrant Families and Their Children

References and Suggested Readings

- ◆ Anderson, G.R., Ryan, A. & Leashore, B.R. (Eds.)(1997). The Challenge of Permanency Planning in a Multicultural Society. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.
- ◆ Andujo, E. (1998) Ethnic Identity of Transethnically Adopted Hispanic Adolescents. Social Work, 33(6), 531-535.
- ◆ Atkinson, D.R., Morten, G., Sue, D.W. Counseling American Minorities: A Cross Cultural Perspective. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown, 1989.
- ◆ Canino, I. & Spurlock, J. (1994). Culturally Diverse Children and Adolescents: Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment. New York: The Guilford Press.
- ◆ CASSP Technical Assistance Center; Cross, Terry L, et.al. (1989) Towards a culturally competent system of care, Vol.I. Washington, DC : Georgetown University Child Development Center.
- ◆ Chang, H., Salazar, D. & Leong, C. (1994) Drawing strength from diversity: Effective services for youth and families. California Tomorrow.
- ◆ Cheung, K.F., Leung, P. & Stevenson, K.M. (1994). A Strengths Approach to Ethnically Sensitive Practice for Child Protective Service Workers. Child Welfare, 73(6), 707-721.
- ◆ Cross T., Bazron, B., Dennis, K., & Isaacs, M. (1989). Towards a culturally competent system of care, volume I. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center.
- ◆ Devore, W. and Schlesinger (1991) Ethnic-sensitive social work practice. 3rd Edition. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- ◆ Denby, R.W., Curtus, C.M. & Alford, K.A. (1998). Family Preservation Services and Special Populations: The Invisible Target. Families in Society, 79(1), 3-14.
- ◆ Davis, K. (1997). Exploring the intersection between cultural competency and managed behavioral health care policy: Implications for state and county mental health agencies. Alexandria, VA: National Technical Assistance Center for State Mental Health Planning.
- ◆ Ewalt, Patricia L., et al. (1996). A Conceptual Framework of Identity Formation in a Society of Multiple Cultures. Multicultural Issues in Social Work, National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Washington, D.C.
- ◆ Fadiman, Anne, The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors and the Collision of Two Cultures, The Noonday Press, New York, NY, 1997.

- ◆ Fong, R. (1994). Family Preservation: Making It Work for Asians. Child Welfare, 73(4), 331-341.
- ◆ Garbarino, J., and Ebata, A. The Significance of Ethnic and Cultural Differences in Child Maltreatment. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 45(4), November, 1983: 773-783.
- ◆ Giovannoni, J.M. and Becerra, R.M. Defining Child Abuse. New York: The Free Press, 1979.
- ◆ Gray, E. and Cosgrove, J. (1985) "Ethnocentric perception of childrearing process," Child Abuse & Neglect, Vol. 9, 389-396.
- ◆ Green, J.W. (1982) Cultural awareness in the human services. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- ◆ Gong, S.M. Child Abuse and Neglect: Perceptions Held by Asian Americans. Ph.D. Dissertation. Boston, MA: Boston University Graduate School, 1985.
- ◆ Hogan, P.T. & Siu, S.F. (1988). Minority Children and the Child Welfare System: An Historical Perspective. Social Work, 33(6), 493-498.
- ◆ Hall, E.T. (1976) Beyond culture. Garden City: Anchor Books.
- ◆ Harris, N. (1990) "Dealing with Diverse Cultures in Child Welfare" Protecting Children/Fall 1990, 6-7.
- ◆ Hong, G.K., Hong, L.K. (1991). Comparative Perspectives on Child Abuse and Neglect: Chinese versus Hispanics and Whites. Child Welfare League of America, 463-375.
- ◆ Isaacs, M. and Benjamin, M. (1991). Towards a culturally competent system of care, volume II, programs which utilize culturally competent principles. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center.
- ◆ Knitzer, J. (1982). Unclaimed Children: The failure of public responsibility to children and adolescents in need of mental health services. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- ◆ Korbin, J.E. The Cultural Context of Child Abuse and Neglect. In the Battered Child, edited by C.H. Kempe and R.E. Helfer. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980:21-35.
- ◆ Korbin, J.E. (ed.) Child Abuse and Neglect: Cross-Cultural Perspectives. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981.
- ◆ Mayhall, P.D., and Norgard, K.E. Child and Neglect: Sharing Responsibility. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1983.

- ◆ McPhatter, A.R. (1997). Cultural Competence in Child Welfare: What Is It? How Do We Achieve It? What Happens Without It? Child Welfare, 76(1), 225-278.
- ◆ Nash, K.A. (1999). Cultural Competence: A Guide for Human Service Agencies. Washington, DC:CWLA Press.
- ◆ Paniagua, F.A. (1994). Assessing and Treating Culturally Diverse Clients: A Practical Guide. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- ◆ Pederson, P.B., Draguns, J.G., Lonner, W.J. & Trimble, J.E. (1996). Counseling Across Cultures. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- ◆ Pierce, R.L. & Pierce, L.H. (1996). Moving Toward Cultural Competence in the Child Welfare System. Children and Youth Services Review, 18(8), 713-731.
- ◆ Pinderhughes, E. (1997). Developing Diversity Competence in Child Welfare and Permanency Planning. Journal of Multicultural Social Work, 5(1/2), 19-38.
- ◆ Randell-David, E. (1989) Strategies for working with culturally diverse communities and clients. Washington, DC: Association for the Care of Children's Health.
- ◆ Rothman, J., Gant, L.M., Hnat, S.A. (1985). Mexican-American Family Culture. Social Service Review, 199-215.
- ◆
- ◆ Smith, D. C., Leake, D. W., & Kamekona, N. (1998). Effects of a culturally competent school-based intervention for at-risk hawaiian students. Pacific Educational Research Journal, 9(1), 3-15.
- ◆ Spearly, J.L. & Lauderdale, M. (1983). Community Characteristics and Ethnicity in the Prediction of Child Maltreatment Rates. Child Abuse and Neglect, 7, 91-105.
- ◆ Spector, Rachel E., Cultural Diversity in Health and Illness (4th Ed.), Appleton and Lange, Stamford, CT, (1986).
- ◆ Sue, D.W. & Sue, D. (1990). Counseling the Culturally Different: Theory and Practice(2nd Edition). New York: Wiley-Interscience.