The Importance of Cultural Competency in Emergency Management

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Learning Objectives

• To identify the need for establishing cultural competence as a core competency in emergency management.
• To understand how cultural awareness can help make communities more resilient.
• To learn how to integrate cultural competency into your organization.
We will discuss:

- **Definitions of culture.**
- **The history of how organizations in Snohomish County partnered to create cultural awareness workshops.**
- **The importance of cultural competence in emergency management**
- **The effectiveness of cultural awareness workshops**
- **Putting together a resilience coalition**
What is Cultural Competency

• Like other core competencies, this is a journey rather than an objective set in stone
• Value and Respect for individual
• Changing attitudes & behavior
• Sensitive self-reflection
• Cultural Efficacy
What is NOT cultural competency?

• Something you can learn in a class
• Something someone can teach you
• A checklist of dos & don’ts
Why is Cultural Competency Important in Public Health Preparedness?

- Diagnosis study disproportionately treated African American patients

(Hunt, 2011)
We cannot respond to every person – preparing every person is a possibility

Often immigrant populations are mistrustful of authority & government
Response

• If we have not built bridges of trust to diverse communities, it will be difficult to respond to the entire community.

• If we cannot effectively communicate to all communities, in a disaster, we will waste precious time.
Recovery

• If we leave any group out of recovery, the entire community could pay the price
Mitigation

• We can grow our community to be more healthy, resilient and sustainable.
WHAT IS CULTURE?

Profession, family, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, experiences, gender, marital status, age, immigration status, disability, socio-economic status, rural/urban background and more!
Growing partnerships with organizations serving diverse communities

Outreach to diverse communities

Trainings and workshops

Continuing the Journey – web page & tools

Resilience Coalition
GROWING PARTNERSHIPS WITH DIVERSE ORGANIZATIONS

• Serving on boards of grassroots organizations
• Writing grants to provide communication and other services in disasters
• Providing training to grassroots organizations
Refugee & Immigrant Services Northwest

- 800 MHz radio for disasters
  - Incorporating RISNW into regional trainings & exercises.
  - Drills
  - Trainings
South Everett Neighborhood Center and Familias Unidas

- Trained staff in WEBEOC & Call Center
- Writing grant to get TTT for medical interpreter certification
Become a member/Serve on a Board

- City of Everett Diversity Advisory Board
- Communities of Color Coalition
- Snohomish County Black Heritage Committee
- NAACP
OUTREACH TO DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

- Participation in community fairs
- Recruit a diverse workforce
- Partner with community organizations on projects
Community Fairs

• National Night out at Familias Unidas
• Students of Color Career Conference
• Cinco de Mayo Celebrations
• NAACP Outreach event
• Council for the Blind
• Sustainability fairs
• Housing Hope
• WorkSource
Recruit a Diverse Workforce

- Participate in Diversity job fairs
- Add bi-lingual skills to application process
- Invite partners from diverse organizations to participate in interview teams
Partner with Community Organizations on Projects

(Unnatural Causes 2008), (Project Homeless Connect, 2012)
TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS

- Cultural Awareness workshops
- Cultural Competency trainings
- Cultural Efficacy workshops

Photos courtesy of Victor Harris
Cultural Awareness Workshops

* Worked with census & RISNW to identify demographics
* Series of workshops on ethnic cultures
* Series of workshops on social cultures
  - Disability
  - Socio-economic
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Sexual orientation

(City of Everett Diversity Advisory Board n.d.)
Presentations

• Presenters selected from the community
• Provided templates to keep continuity
Results of Workshops

Participant Self-assessment of Knowledge of Culture Addressed

- Excellent: 57.9%
- Good: 36.8%
- Minimal: 3.5%
- No Answer: 0.4%

Participant Assessment of Session Quality

- Excellent: 59.8%
- Good: 36.8%
- Minimal: 1.9%
- No Answer: 1.4%

Reese, 2010
Cultural Competency

- Self awareness
- Make it fun & interactive
- Provide more opportunities for learning – ongoing.
CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

• Calendar of events
• Calendar of trainings
• Listing of community organizations
• Links to resources – Project Implicit, etc.
RESILIENCE COALITION

• A two-way advisory committee
• Representatives from stakeholder organizations
REFERENCES

"Advisory on Diversity." *City of Everett.*


REFERENCES

