

# Cultural Competency: Bridging Barriers

Jewish Vocational Service  
1608 Baltimore Ave.  
Kansas City, MO 64108  
[www.jvskc.org](http://www.jvskc.org)



■ Presented by Jewish Vocational Service

**History:** established in 1949 to resettle Holocaust survivors and other refugees. JVS is the refugee resettlement organization for Kansas City, MO.

**MISSION:** *JVS strengthens the well-being of individuals, families and the community by promoting successful social, cultural and economic integration.*

Cathy Anderson, manager of JVS Language and Cultural Services  
[canders@jvskc.org](mailto:canders@jvskc.org)



## Community of Trust

- Connected by our commitment to help others receive the care they deserve.
- Challenged by changing community needs: services, budgets, regulations.
- We are human with limited knowledge/vision.
- We need each other to understand our work.
- We need to talk about what we see and what we perceive is a reality for our communities.



## Poverty in the U.S.

- 51.4% of people in the U.S. experience poverty at some time in their lives before age 65.
- From 2000-08 suburbs in the country's largest metro areas saw their low-income populations grow by 25%, faster than the cities themselves.

(The Urban Institute)



## Poverty in Kansas

- In KS (2009) poverty increased 13.4%, up 2.1% from the year before. Outpaced the U.S. average.
- In 2008-09, 153,756 of Kansans in extreme poverty. (Social Impact Research Center)



## Regional Gaps

- Both MO and KS are below the U.S. income median of \$50,740.
- MO ranks 39<sup>th</sup> in country in poor health based on level of education.



## United Community Services (Johnson County, KS)

- Poverty on the rise in the suburbs:
- Johnson, Cass, Clay, Plate show a combined increase of 111% between 2000 and 2009.
- Wyandotte and Jackson: 37% increase.



## Reasons for poverty growth in the suburbs

- Downward mobility of the middle-class.
- Recession, loss of jobs.
- Low-income people move to suburbs for
- jobs and better schools.



## Poverty: A Health Hazard

- Social factors may cause death, like smoking cigarettes causes lung cancer.
- Death attributed to six social factors, including low income.
- 176,000 deaths to racial segregation.  
133,000 to individual poverty.

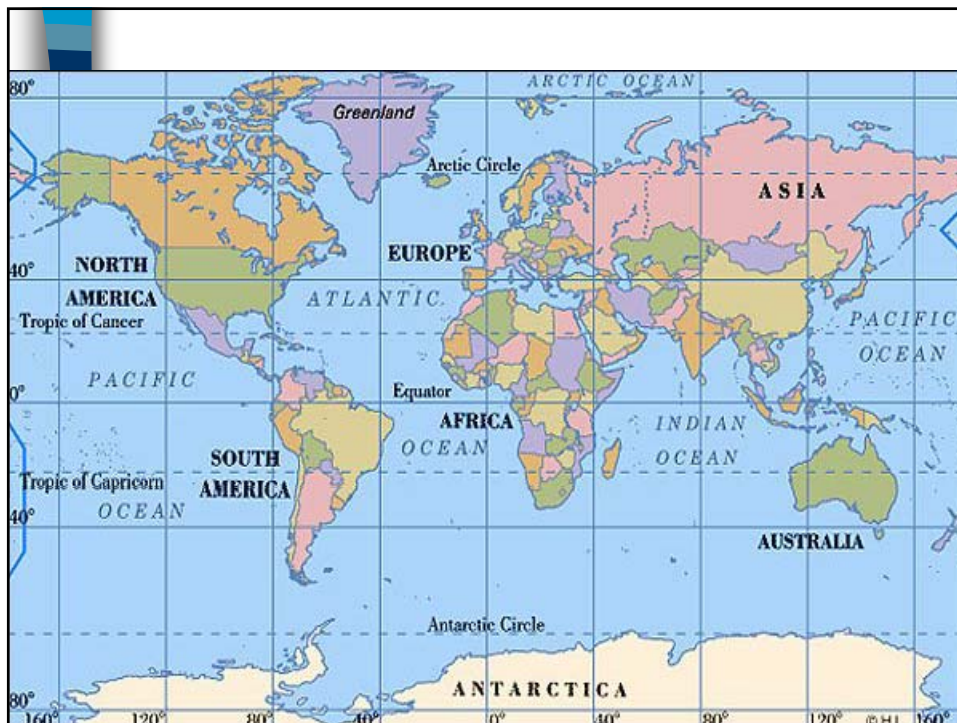


## Direct causes of death: A comparison

- 119,000 people in the U.S. die from accidents.
- 156,000 people in the U.S. die from lung cancer.

## Why poverty as a cause of death?

- Poverty = poor access to health screening.
- Poverty = poor access to quality care for those with heart disease.
- Poverty = greater vulnerability.
- Poverty = greater likelihood of indulging in unhealthy behavior.
- (*The American Journal of Public Health*, June 16, 2011)





## Welcome to a Changing World

- The U.S. is home to 336 languages, spoken or signed.
- 27,000 people speak Hawaiian, a language indigenous to the state of Hawai'i.
- The U.S. is the world's 5th largest Spanish-speaking population, outnumbered by Mexico, Spain, Argentina and Colombia.
- Wikipedia: from Hawaiian word: *wiki*.



## Local Demographics

- Between 1994 and 2004, the Hispanic population in 8 of the Greater Kansas City Metro area counties doubled from 52,849 to 116,562. (MARC)
- New Refugees: In 2010, almost 500 were admitted to Kansas City, MO.
- Largest: Somali, with approximately 4,000-5,000 members.
- Newest: Burmese



## The word “disparity”

- Definition: The condition or fact of being unequal as in age, rank, or degree. Difference.
- Add: difference in education, socio-economic status, health.



## Health and Education Disparities

- 40% of those not graduated from high school are uninsured.
- 10% of college graduates are uninsured.
- Lack of health insurance means less medical care, prevention screenings and less access to treatment.



## A World of Difference

- If we could shrink the world's population to a village of 100 people, what would it look like?
- 55 villagers would be female, 48 would be male.
- 33 would be children.
- 58 would be Asian.
- 79 would be persons of color.
- 80 would live in sub-standard housing.
- 66 would not have access to clean water.
- 30 would be Christian.
- 50 would suffer from malnutrition.

## Cultural Competency: What is it?




To be culturally competent doesn't mean you are an authority in the values and beliefs of every culture. What it means is that you hold a deep respect for cultural differences and are eager to learn, and are willing to accept, that there are many ways of viewing the world.

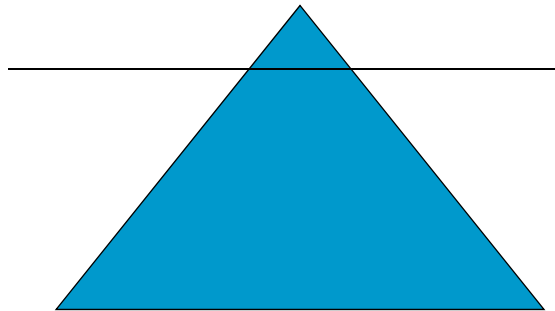
*- Okokon O. Udo, BD, PhD, CPCC, Ordained Presbyterian Minister  
--From Cross Cultural Health Care Program*



# What is Culture?



Sometimes we only see the TIP of the ICEBERG






Is Seeing Believing? Let's break the habit of stereotyping.



A question. . .

**What aspects of culture are below the water level of the cultural iceberg?**



## Cultural Lenses: How we **SEE**, how we are **SEEN**



A grasshopper walks into a bar. . .



## A Testimony

“I am reminded each day that I render decisions that affect people concretely and that I owe them constant and complete vigilance in checking my assumptions, presumptions and perspectives and ensuring that to the extent that my limited abilities and capabilities permit me, that I re-evaluate them and change as circumstances and cases before me requires.”


Judge Sonia Sotomayor, Supreme Court Judge



## US Culture: A fish doesn't see water.

### ■ U.S. Values

- Independence
  - Competition
  - Individual Achievement
  - Promotion and Position
  - Education
  - Wealth
  - Ownership
  - Connections to power



## Different Communication Styles: How to use these styles to communicate effectively.

- **High Context Cultures**
  - Use context AND words to convey meaning. Eye contact, gestures, space, silence and touch convey meaning.
  - **Sensory Learning**
    - demonstration, visual, hearing
      - repetition
      - diagrams
      - color coding
      - imagery
      - picture checklist
- **Low Context Cultures**
  - Use words primarily. Gestures are not as significant.
  - **Non-sensory learning**
    - text/computer
      - European-American
      - German
      - Swedish
      - English



## Literacy and Poverty

- US: 30 million over the age of thirty cannot read.
- US is 5<sup>th</sup> in literacy skills among industrialized nations.
- 60% of state and federal inmates cannot read.



## Literacy and Poverty

- In the U.S., employers demand at least 2 years of college.
- In the U.S., lack of health literacy skills adds \$230 billion to health care costs.



## Literacy Resources/Community Partnerships

- ProLiteracy: advocacy, training, publications
- Topeka Literacy Council
- Goodwill Industry Easter Seals
- Butler County Community College (El Dorado, KS)
- Also in Junction City and Arkansas City



## Culture, Conflict and Organizations

- **Conflict usually occurs due to:**
  - **Misperception**
    - That person doesn't like me.
  - **Historical Significance**
    - Pre-existing attitudes about services
  - **Lack of Structure and Poor Communication**
    - Clearly defined rules, roles and procedures
      - Problem Solving vs. Asking questions
  - **Language and Gender Differences**
    - Why are they talking about me?
    - I don't need to take orders from her.



## Questions for discussion.

- How do we effectively communicate complex information in a way to assist understanding?
- How do we acknowledge our own biases in the constraints of time and organizational pressures?
- How do we bridge partnerships with local organizations that can assist?



Contact us. Or, if you visit KC, stop by!

**Jewish Vocational Service  
Language and Cultural Services**

**1608 Baltimore**

**Kansas City, MO 64108**

**(816) 471 - 2808**

[www.jvskc.org](http://www.jvskc.org)

**canders@jvskc.org**