

The **SHARE** Approach Taking Steps Toward Cultural Competence: A Fact Sheet

Workshop Curriculum: Tool 7

The SHARE Approach is a five-step model, curriculum, and toolkit for shared decision making developed by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The SHARE Approach aims to help healthcare professionals work with patients to explore and compare healthcare options through meaningful dialogue about what matters most to the patient and to make the best possible healthcare decisions.

Cultural competence is essential for effective shared decision making.

Providers striving to deliver high-quality care to all patients understand that cultural factors influence patients' health beliefs, behaviors, and responses to medical issues. This fact sheet provides guidance for how to consider cultural differences as you build effective relationships with your patients during shared decision making.

Learn how to interact with diverse patients.

- Keep an open mind. Remember that each patient has a unique set of beliefs and values, and they may differ from yours.
- Ask patients about their health beliefs regarding their health condition (e.g., “What do you think caused the problem? What do you fear most about the sickness? Why do you think it started when it did?”). This information will allow you to make the most of your interactions during shared decision making. Recognize and understand that the meaning or value of health prevention, intervention, and treatment may vary greatly among cultures, especially for behavioral health.
- Attend cultural competence training at your organization or through a continuing education program.
- Be aware of your own culture and how that may affect how you communicate with your patients.



- Reach out to cultural brokers to help you learn more about the differences and similarities between cultures. They can tell you how to better address the patients you serve regarding cultural appropriateness, beliefs about health, and barriers to communication. Cultural brokers might include healthcare and social service workers and cultural group leaders. Ask them to suggest resources you can use to learn more about your patients' cultures.
- Know what you don't know. You won't be able to learn about every aspect of every patient's culture. Don't be afraid to let your patients know that you are unfamiliar with their culture. Invite them to explain what is important to them and how getting and staying well works in their community.

Keep in mind that culture is not homogeneous. There is great diversity among individuals, even in the smallest cultural group.

In addition, culture changes over time, especially when one cultural group is exposed to and influenced by another culture.

Provide culturally appropriate decision aids.

- Ask your patients about their learning preferences to help you present information better during shared decision making. Find out if your patients prefer for you to offer materials in print, video, or audio format. Ask your patients if they would like you to explain by talking, using a model, making a drawing, or demonstrating how to do something. You may find your patients want you to present information in a variety of ways.
- Make sure that multimedia decision aids (videos, DVDs, CDs, audiotapes), other health resources for treatment, and other intervention materials reflect the cultures of the patients you serve.
- When possible, offer decision aids, treatment summaries, and educational materials that have culturally relevant descriptions of risks and benefits of treatment options. The best decision aids meet cultural needs, as well as health literacy or plain language standards.
- Assess the quality of decision aids by using the International Patient Decision Aids Standards (IPDAS) Collaboration Criteria Checklist at <http://ipdas.ohri.ca/index.html>.

Provide qualified medical interpreters.

- Provide qualified medical interpreters for patients whose English proficiency is limited. The use of unqualified interpreters, such as a family member, friend, or unqualified staff member, is not advisable. Never use minor children to interpret, as it can unduly pressure them and lead to distress if they make a mistake. Using any unqualified interpreters is more likely to result in misunderstandings and medical errors. Refer to [Overcoming Communication Barriers With Your Patients: A Reference Guide for Healthcare Providers](#) (Tool 3).
- You can sometimes spot cultural misunderstandings by asking patients to say in their own words what you have taught them. Refer to [Using the Teach-Back Technique: A Reference Guide for Healthcare Providers](#) (Tool 6).

Nodding and saying “yes” does not always mean comprehension has been achieved. Gently ask patients or family members to convey the information in their own words to make sure they understand.

Work to build trust.

- Show respect for your patients in culturally appropriate ways. Make it clear that your role is to help them choose from among the options, not to make the decision for them.
- Recognize that in many cultures, family members are deeply involved in health decisions. Involve extended family members, when appropriate, in shared decision making and when planning care.
- Encourage patients to ask you questions. Explain that asking questions is a good way to learn about health problems and options for treatment. Say, “What questions do you have for me today?”
- Choose signs, magazines, brochures, and other printed materials that reflect your patients’ cultures. This approach will help put them at ease.

Cultural competence is critical to reducing health disparities and improving access to high-quality healthcare that is respectful of, and responsive to, the needs of diverse patients.

Learn about and understand the principles and practices of cultural competence and begin applying them with the patients you serve.

Bibliography

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This tool is to be used in conjunction with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s SHARE Approach workshop. To learn more about the workshop, visit www.ahrq.gov/shareddecisionmaking.



AHRQ Pub. No. 21-0015-7-EF
Replaces AHRQ Pub No. 14-0034-7-EF
April 2021

www.ahrq.gov