

## Additional Definitions of Cultural Competence

Many definitions of cultural competence are emerging in the literature yet none is accepted by everyone. The term "cultural competence" embodies the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and protocols that allow an individual or system to render services across cultural lines in an optimal manner. Cultural competency permits individuals to respond with respect and empathy to people of all cultures, classes, races, religions, sexual orientations, and ethnic backgrounds in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities. It has been characterized as a continuum that encompasses several stages that include:

- understanding one's own cultural background,
- acknowledging the patient's culture, value systems, beliefs, and behaviors,
- recognizing that cultural difference is not synonymous with cultural inferiority,
- learning about the patient's culture that may differ from one's own, and
- adapting how health care is provided to the patient to respect the patient's cultural framework as much as possible.

Several culture-related terms used in the scientific literature include:

**biculturalism** - the simultaneous identification with two cultures

**cross cultural** - interaction between individuals from different cultures

**culture** - the shared values, norms, traditions, customs, arts, history, folklore and institutions of a group of people

**cultural diversity** - differences in race, ethnicity, language, nationality, sexual orientation, or religion

**ethnicity** - belonging to a common group with shared heritage, often linked by race, nationality and language

**race** - a socially defined population that is derived from distinguishable physical characteristics that are genetically determined