

What Is the Kalamazoo WRAPS Cultural and Linguistic Competency Committee?

Cultural and Linguistic Competency is a complicated sounding term that just means that children who need help for emotional problems shouldn't have a hard time getting that help because of their race, or ethnicity, or sexual orientation, or family income, or the language they speak.

The goal of the Kalamazoo Wraps Cultural and Linguistic Competency Committee is *to ensure that Kalamazoo County Systems of Care Provide culturally competent service.*

WHAT IS KALAMAZOO WRAPS?

Kalamazoo Wraps helps improve the lives of youth with serious emotional disturbance and the lives of their families so that they have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Kalamazoo Wraps works to ensure that families and youth are equal partners at every level of service provision and that the system of care offers assessments and interventions that are accurate, effective and bias free.

Kalamazoo WRAPS is about creating an excellent system of care for seriously emotionally disturbed children and youth. We can't do that if it's harder for some youth to get help because of their race, ethnicity, primary language, or their sexual orientation or gender identity.

WHAT DOES THE KALAMAZOO WRAPS CLC COMMITTEE DO?

- The Cultural and Linguistic Competency Committee of Wraps is responsible for identifying the attitudes, behaviors, or System of Care (mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare, educational) policies that may discourage African Americans, Native Americans, Latino or Hispanic Americans, Gay and Lesbian Americans or other cultural or ethnic American families from seeking the help they need for SED children.
- We examine service and staffing disparities that may impact minority access to culturally competent and effective service.
- We review and recommend educational and training procedures that ensure that minority families and youth receive help from System of Care providers that are culturally and linguistically competent.
- We recommend policy and governance procedures that will remove barriers to service for minority youth and families.
- We promote awareness of the needs and barriers faced by minority SED children and their families.
- We work to ensure that service providers possess the attitudes, knowledge and skills to effectively serve all youth and their families.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS?

- How can we help a young person who is having serious emotional problems if we can't speak to them or their parents in a language they understand?
- How will parents even know that there is help available if they have to depend upon their child to interpret and that child is afraid of getting help?
- How can we help fearful Latino or gay teens who have high suicide attempt risks seek help before their emotional distress leads to suicide attempts?
- How can we develop focused trainings that address individual needs rather than just general diversity education?

What Barriers Are Faced By Ethnic & Cultural Minorities ?

We don't know all the barriers. Research and service data tells us that African American children are often misdiagnosed or are sent into the juvenile justice system instead of being helped by mental health counselors when their problems first begin. And gay and lesbian children often don't get needed services because they're afraid to tell their parents or a counselor that they're gay. And we know that some Latino families have barriers communicating with mental health counselors or reading printed brochures and information materials that are not written in their primary language. These are some of the problems that the members of the Cultural and Linguistic Competency (CLC) are addressing but we need your help to identify other problems and their solutions.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Join the Kalamazoo Wraps Cultural and Linguistic Competency Committee. If you have experienced problems getting services because you are African American, Latino/Hispanic, Native American, Gay or Lesbian or a member of any other ethnic or cultural minority you can help. If you're a service provider, counselor, educator, juvenile justice worker, social worker, pastor or any other professional who works with members of a cultural or ethnic minority you can help.

What is Expected & How Can You Get Involved?

CLC participation involves 5-7 hours of work per month (3 hours meeting & 2-4 additional hours on reading & work assignments. We meet the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 3:30-5:00pm at 432 Crosstown Parkway. If you would like to attend a meeting, become a member, or just share your concerns or experiences you may email Sharon Roepke, CLC Consultant at slroepke@aol.com or call (269) 385-3623.

We welcome families, youth, counselors, educators, everyone who wants to ensure that all SED children receive quality care.