

Cultural Humility

Culture is a set of beliefs, values, traditions, and practices shared by a group of people. Raising children is largely influenced by culture. Cultural humility is possessing a humble and respectful attitude toward individuals of other cultures, challenging our personal biases, and learning about others. This life-long process involves self-reflection, critique, and discovery to learn about other cultures and building honest, trustworthy relationships with people of different backgrounds. It starts with an examination of one's own beliefs, values, and assumptions by considering one's own background and social environment and how it has shaped personal experience.

Our advocacy requires us to critically self-reflect, reserve judgment, learn from people we meet, and bridge the cultural divide between diverse perspectives so that we may develop and maintain mutual respect and collaborative working relationships. Furthermore, our advocacy must place an importance on individual and family strengths, social understanding, and possess a genuine regard for others. When we are open to understanding the causes of individuals' differences and respond to them sensitively, we make each other feel understood and equity is enhanced.

As CASAs, we must acknowledge the power imbalance that is inherent in our work of a system intervening in the lives of families in crisis. The families we encounter often face systemic challenges such as racism, discrimination, and poverty. As a culturally-aware network, we are empathetic, compassionate, and open-minded; we seek to challenge disparities and ensure all children and families are treated with dignity and respect.

Bridging Cultural Differences

Use reflective and active listening when interviewing children and families by nodding in encouragement and repeating back what you've heard using the speaker's own words, affirming worth and value even if you don't share the same perspective

Avoid subtleties in your tone of voice, attitude, body language, and word choice to build rapport and convey empathy

Reserve judgment by remaining open-minded while learning about a family's situation and background

Remain objective and make space when you find yourself wanting to offer opinions based on personal beliefs and values

Acknowledge differences by being culturally sensitive to someone whose circumstances are in part beyond their control or the result of an imbalance of power

Use person-first language (*e.g. children who have experienced foster care, not foster children*)

Self-reflect and analyze implicit biases to ensure personal values do not deter from advocating for the child's best interests

Advocating with Humility by Supporting and Investing in Families

Examine understanding and expand personal knowledge and perspective by learning about the family's culture and their unique experiences

Remember minimum sufficient level of care that supports children being reunified whenever they can be kept safe or placed with relatives whenever possible to promote familial bonds

View the family from a resource lens, identify their strengths, and recognize their wisdom in their own experiences

Encourage and empower parents in meeting their case plan goals to promote timely reunification

Address others involved in the case who display or exhibit cultural insensitivity

Ensure all recommendations are supported by facts and best interest recommendations and challenge any unsupported assumptions