



Handout 8-5: Tip Sheet for Workers Working With Fathers Who Are Culturally Different

The following tips are discussed general terms and are not meant to be applicable to all individuals belonging to a marginalized culture:

- Ask yourself if you are assessing the father through the lens of the dominant culture.
- Seek to understand his basic cultural values and worldview.
- Acknowledge the historical and contemporary issues he experiences, likely daily.
- Listen to his story. This cannot be underscored enough. Workers will likely receive helpful and useful information by allowing the father to tell his story.
- Remain open to recognizing possible cultural responses to trauma. This means that based on his historical legacy and current marginalized position, he may react by “shutting down,” “fighting back” or “giving up.”
- Don’t assume that he is not connected to his culture simply based on what you don’t see or what you may not hear.
- Acknowledge your limitations around your differences and don’t be afraid to apologize if you sense or know that you have offended him.
- Let him know that you would appreciate him letting you know if you do something that is offensive. This will give you an opportunity to apologize and correct the unintentional error so not to impede the development of the relationship and it will also be a teachable moment for you.
- If appropriate, help him search for meaning in child welfare’s involvement in his life.
- Remain aware of culturally specific communication styles, and what is appropriate and what is not.
- Listen for information on informal support systems such as family, faith communities and extended blood and non-blood kin.
- Use language that fosters trust and alliance.
- It may take a long time to develop rapport, so be patient.
- Ask yourself if any of your interventions or suggestions empower the father to embrace his culture with the caveat that they are not abusive.

Cultural competence is not something that can be achieved but an ongoing process of seeking knowledge and awareness of individuals who are culturally different.

(Adapted from Lucero, N. M., *Culturally-responsive practice with American Indian families*, and McMahon, J., & Ramirez, A. (Eds.). (2001, May). African American children in the child welfare system. *Children's Services Practice Notes* (North Carolina Division of Social Services), 6(2).