

Caring for Special Populations

(Cultural Competency: Amish, Immigrant, LGBT)

Culturally competent care, an important component of excellence in healthcare delivery, can improve adherence to treatment plans, lead to better outcomes and better overall quality of health. Cultural competency seeks to provide the highest quality care for every individual, regardless of culture. Healthcare quality is of particular concern for people with chronic conditions. This fact sheet will offer tips to providing care to three populations: Amish, Immigrant, and LGBT.

Amish

The Amish tend to seek care for acute illnesses, preferring alternative and more traditional methods of care for chronic illnesses. Providers should ask about any alternative treatments that are being used to ensure those treatments will not affect any prescribed care. Most Amish do not utilize insurance, though some families are open to using Children's Special Health Care Services, or rarely Medicaid, for therapies or other services.

The Amish should be greeted with a smile and a firm handshake, and eye contact is important. English is the preferred written and spoken language, but providers should clarify symptoms and beware of using slang or idioms that may not be understood correctly. Realize that the spokesperson may not be the primary decision maker and that family and community are important when making decisions. When a family member must be hospitalized, accommodations need to be made for the accompanying family members.

Immigrant

One of the challenges to providing healthcare with immigrants is overcoming communication issues. Language barriers may affect the patient's/family's ability to read and understand instructions on prescription or medicine bottles, health educational materials, and insurance forms. As often as possible, written materials should be made available in other languages, while reflecting cultural-specific attitudes and values.

In the absence of minority staff, a list of language and translation services can be found here: <https://www.in.gov/health/minority-health/minority-health-resources/language-translation-and-migrant-programs/>.

Delivery of healthcare services and systems may have been quite different in the home country and may be confusing. Increasingly peer educators are becoming more common and can act as bridges between the immigrant community and healthcare services.

The Immigrants' and Legal Rights Center at Indiana Legal Services assists immigrants and LEP populations to residents of Indiana who are low income and have an eligible immigration status. For more information see: <https://www.indianalegalservices.org/ilrc>

The Family Voices Immigration Toolkit is a collection of documents designed to inform, empower, and assist families of children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) and the professionals who support them. The toolkit is available at this link: <https://familyvoices.org/resources/?sq=immigration+toolkit>

LGBT

“LGBT” refers broadly to sexual minority groups including, but not limited to, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, differences/disorders in sex development, and two spirit. It is important to identify populations at risk for disparities in disability and other secondary conditions.

Those who refer to themselves as LGBT should feel free to share in a nonjudgmental, confidential environment. Unisex restroom facilities, asking gender identity on intake forms, and posting of a nongender discriminatory policy all point toward a welcoming environment for these youth.

Providers should strive to make questioning routine and inclusive. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends using open ended questions, such as “Tell me about your relationship,” instead of using binary terms like boyfriend or girlfriend.

Provide educational materials that support LGBT kids and their families, including a list of local parent groups that support LBGT youth, such as PFLAG.

The American Academy of Pediatricians offers a resource list of materials geared towards caring for LGBT youth - available here: <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Pages/LGBT-Resources.aspx>

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association offers a handy, free, downloadable resource guide for practitioners to help families support their LGBT child. Download link: <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/A-Practitioner-s-Resource-Guide-Helping-Families-to-Support-Their-LGBT-Children/PEP14-LGBTKIDS>

Programs and systems change often. It is important to ensure that you are using the most current information. This fact sheet was updated August 2021. Please check http://inf2f.org/fact_sheets for the most recent edition.

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