

CAP TIPS #4 **To Improve Public Awareness**

Developing Culturally Competent Resources for Crime Victims and Survivors

Introduction

A longstanding challenge to America's victim assistance field is to develop information and resources for crime victims and survivors that are culturally and ethnically competent, and to promote outreach efforts that collaborate with culturally-diverse communities. The ultimate goal is to ensure that *all* victims – regardless of their culture, ethnicity or language – have information about and access to quality victim assistance services.

The vast range of cultures in the United States is described by WikiAnswers.com, which notes that “there are as many cultures in the United States as there are in the world, as the United States is the place of some form of acceptance for all cultures and ethnic people. In retrospect, the United States has just one culture: the culture of variety. To know how many individual cultures exist in America is to know how many exist in the world, and cultures change and evolve as quickly as the times.”

According to projections by the Pew Research Center, “If current trends continue, the population of the United States will rise to 438 million in 2050, from 296 million in 2005. Eighty-two percent of the increase will be due to immigrants arriving from 2005 to 2050 and their U.S.-born descendants.”

Tips for Developing Culturally Competent Resources

The “Checklist for Developing Culturally Competent Health Communications Programs” published by the Centers for Disease Control (see “References and Resources” below) offers excellent suggestions for developing resources that are culturally- and ethnically-competent (which have been adapted for this CAP TIP):

Language

- Remember, ideally materials should be developed first in the language of the target audience, and then translated into English.
- Assess the literacy level of the target audience.
- Offer an English translation of the text.

- Select a qualified and trained translator, regardless of whether the translation is done in-house, by a freelance translator or a translating company. Use a translator who knows the target audience and has translated many types of documents.
- Do “back translations,” which require two qualified translators, translating the material from English to the second language and back to English again, several times.
- Ease the translation process:
 - Use short, simple words.
 - Use phrases that flow easily in the translated language (which may differ from the English version).
 - Write in the *active voice*, when culturally appropriate (i.e. avoiding verbs that in English, would include the suffix “ing”).
 - Avoid abstract concepts (which may not translate well from English to the language of audiences of another culture).
 - Be very direct.
 - Avoid jargon and technical terms.
 - Avoid criminal justice and victim assistance acronyms (that may be confusing to your audience); and if they are used, explain clearly what they mean.
- Consider including specific information in your written materials or on your website that indicates – in the language of culturally-diverse populations you are trying to reach – that “this information is also available in (language[s]) by (indicate how to access the information in a different language).”

Working with Translators

It’s important to recognize that translation involves not only *language*, but also sometimes *different dialects* within a language.

Translators can be sought from a number of resources, including:

- Leaders from a specific culturally-diverse community (who should be familiar with specific dialects of the language most commonly spoken by community members). You can also ask for recommendations for seasoned translators from such leaders.
- Language departments at local universities and colleges.
- In some communities, foreign embassies and posts can assist with simple translation that is not too time-consuming.

Some good translation tips are to:

- Allow the translator to select from a wide range of expressions, phrases and terms used by the target audience.
- Instruct the translator on the purpose of the materials; the target audience; and key themes to be addressed.
- Review victim-related terminology with the translator to ensure that all terms are clear relevant to their definitions and intent.

Imagery

- To the extent possible, try to incorporate culturally relevant colors (such as the colors on a nation's flag) with the NCVRW theme colors."
- Incorporate graphics and symbolism that have culturally-appropriate meanings and are familiar to your audience.
- Determine whether photographs, drawings or other visual descriptions speak to the target audience. If you use photographs with people, make sure they reflect the culture of the audience you are trying to reach.
- Be aware that some cultures may prefer lists and bulleted points, and others prefer narratives.
- Use role models from the community. Pay attention to the use of men, women and children; skin color; hairstyles; dress; and jewelry.
- When relevant, use culturally appropriate music.

Predisposing, Enabling and Reinforcing Factors

It's helpful to research key issues about specific cultures that impact their views of crime and victimization, crime victim assistance, and accessing services. For example:

- Family relations.
- Religious beliefs.
- Communication and media preferences.
- Gender roles.
- Any views of law enforcement, criminal justice and victim assistance processes that members of the community may have, based upon prior experiences or views from their country of origin.

- Building on the strength of victims/survivors, instead of just focusing on the trauma of victimization.
- Emphasizing the cultural competence of available victim services and service providers.

Tips for Outreach to Culturally Diverse Communities

It is helpful to identify “gatekeepers” to culturally-diverse communities. Gatekeepers are community leaders who seek to retain and celebrate a culture’s unique identity while, at the same time, ensure that their community members are aware of and can readily access community support and services that can help them – including *crime victim services*. They can be identified through elected bodies with an interest in constituent outreach (such as Boards of Supervisors and City Councils); nonprofit organizations; civic organizations; and multi-faith communities.

Many communities also have ethnically-diverse news media that operate at the county, city and neighborhood levels. These include cable television, newspapers and radio programming, as well as culturally-specific websites and listservs within a community. By partnering with gatekeepers (see above), you can offer information about your NCVRW activities in April, and available victim services throughout the year, by seeking spokespersons who can conduct interviews for print and broadcast news media in languages and styles that are culturally-specific and appropriate.

Multi-faith communities are another great resource for culturally-diverse victim outreach and public awareness. Many can be identified through the Internet; simply type “churches” or “temples/synagogues/mosques in city/county” into any Internet search engine. Once you have a listing of multi-faith organizations, you can conduct outreach via email, telephone or in person to help promote 2009 NCVRW, and victim services throughout the year.

Finally, it’s a good idea to ask your NCVRW Planning Committee about any contacts or past experiences *they* may have with outreach to culturally-diverse communities. Often, personal contacts emerge that provide important linkages to the audiences you are trying to reach.

References and Resources

Harvard Medical School’s Center of Excellence in Women’s Health developed an “Excellence in Women’s Health Cultural Competence Curriculum,” which offers excellent training resources about cultural competence (with one module specifically addressing violence against women). The curricula and other resources can be downloaded at: <http://www.hms.harvard.edu/coewh/cultural/>.

The National Center for Cultural Competence offers a wide range of resources about culturally competent training, outreach and policy development. You can review and download publications at:

<http://www.ask.com/bar?q=National+Center+for+Cultural+COmpetence&page=1&qsrc=0&ab=0&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww11.georgetown.edu%2Fresearch%2Fgucchd%2Fccc%2F>.

The “Checklist for Developing Culturally Competent Health Communications Programs” published by the Centers for Disease Control can be accessed at:

http://www.cdc.gov/DHDSP/CDCynergy_training/Content/activeinformation/resources/CV-cross.cult.tool2.pdf.

The Executive Summary and full Report, “U.S. Population Projections: 2005 – 2050,” developed by the Pew Research Center, can be accessed at:

<http://www.ask.com/bar?q=U.S.+population+projections&page=1&qsrc=0&ab=1&u=http%3A%2F%2Fpewresearch.org%2Fpubs%2F729%2FUnited-states-population-projections>.

For More Information

Please contact National Crime Victims’ Rights Week Community Awareness Project Consultant Anne Seymour via email at annesey@atlantech.net; or by telephone at 202.547.1732.