

# Who We Serve

## 3 Communicating with Diverse Populations



# Introduction

These slides contain content adapted from the Administration for Community Living's Person Centered Counseling Training Program. The content includes text and narration from online courses. To view original content or for more information, please visit [nwd.acl.gov](http://nwd.acl.gov) or contact [NoWrongDoor@acl.hhs.gov](mailto:NoWrongDoor@acl.hhs.gov).

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# Welcome! (1/3)

The No Wrong Door (NWD) system is designed to serve all people who may need any type of long-term services and supports regardless of their age, type of disability, income, or source of payer. In this lesson you will learn how to effectively communicate with all of the diverse populations that may seek services through the NWD system. You will learn about cultural differences in communication and some different ways to communicate. You will also learn about devices, aids, technologies, and tips that can help with effective communication. That includes how to create environments that facilitate effective communication. There are also legal requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that ensure access to effective communication.

# Welcome! (2/3)

The information presented in this lesson can apply to anyone who seeks services in the NWD system – it's not specific to any one population served. You can also learn more about specific communication skills in the Person-Centered Thinking and Practices course, Lesson 8: First Impressions and Conversation Skills and Lesson 10: Further Exploration of Everyday Learning Approaches.

# Welcome! (3/3)

## Learning Objective

After completing this lesson: You will be able to identify and describe different ways to communicate, including aids, devices, adaptations, and tips that can help facilitate effective communication. You will also be able to describe the legal obligation to provide access to communication for people served in the NWD system.

# The Importance of Cross-Cultural Communication (1/3)

Every culture has its own unique way of communicating. For example, a handshake can have different meanings in different cultures. It may even be completely unacceptable in some cultures. Similarly, words or phrases that mean one thing in one culture, may not have the same meaning in another. For example, the phrase “between a rock and a hard place” might not be easily understood in some cultures. Because of this, communication among people from different cultures or with different communication styles can be challenging. Differences can be based on culture, language, disability, age, life experience, and sexual orientation, among other things. These differences can lead to confusion, embarrassment, and frustration. Poor cross-cultural communication is at the root of many misunderstandings.

# The Importance of Cross-Cultural Communication (2/3)

Being able to communicate effectively with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds is critical for you as Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professionals, but it can be challenging. If you and the people you support seek to understand the differences in communication styles, you may then be able to explore them together and discover how to communicate more effectively cross-culturally. However, if there is no awareness, communication differences could cause conflict and dissatisfaction for all parties involved. This can make it more difficult for the people seeking support to exercise choice, control, and direction when expressing what is important to and for them.

# The Importance of Cross-Cultural Communication (3/3)

In the previous lesson, Working with Diverse Populations, you learned about some different practices that can help increase your understanding of other cultures. These practices can also be help you communicate with people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Please note: Much of the content on this screen came from the lesson on Cultural Differences in Communication in the College of Recovery and Community Inclusion (CRCI) course Cultural Competence in Mental Health Service Settings.



# — Different Ways to Communicate (1/4)

There are many different ways to communicate. People can communicate using speech, writing, sign language, gestures, body language, alternative communication devices, or assistive technologies. Some people seeking services in the No Wrong Door (NWD) system may not speak or understand English easily because it might be their second or third language. Others seeking services might use devices or ask others to help them communicate. In these instances, there are several ways to facilitate communication.

# Different Ways to Communicate (2/4)

Consider the following:

- People who speak English as their second language can usually understand more than they can express in English. Even so, don't assume that they understand everything that you're saying in English.
- Speaking naturally but simply is helpful. Just slow down a little. However, do not speak more loudly.
- Be mindful that some words and concepts in English do not have a direct parallel or translation in other languages (and vice versa).
- When appropriate, try to demonstrate a statement rather than just describe it.

# Different Ways to Communicate (3/4)

- Some people may not feel comfortable publicly disagreeing with a Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professional. They may seem to agree or understand when in reality they don't. Ask people to repeat in their own words what you have said, or have them tell you how they understand it.
- If appropriate, check for understanding in multiple ways and at various times.
- Refrain from using colloquialisms, slang, idioms, jargon, or acronyms when speaking. This will help to avoid any miscommunication.
- If you are using an interpreter or the person has someone to help facilitate decision-making, make sure to always speak directly to the person seeking services.

# Different Ways to Communicate (4/4)

In a hearing-dominant society, most people use and value spoken language over other forms of communication. Nonverbal communication is as important as verbal communication. Some people seeking services in the NWD system will not be proficient in English or able to communicate verbally. Because of this it's important to be familiar with other forms of communication and not to rely on one form over another. Some examples include sign language, communication boards, or having another person help with communication and supported decision-making.

# Communication Devices and Aids (1/2)

Devices and aids provide another way to communicate. Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) includes strategies and devices that help people express themselves and communicate. Typical AAC devices include picture boards, tablets with touch screens, such as an iPad, or voice output devices. People seeking services in the No Wrong Door (NWD) system might use some of these devices and aids.

# Communication Devices and Aids (2/2)

People may use AAC devices to help them perform some of these functions:

- Speaking
- Listening
- Hearing
- Understanding
- Concentrating or paying attention
- Processing sounds or language
- Reading and spelling

To learn more about ACC and assistive technology used in communication, go to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders:

<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/pages/assistive-devices.aspx>

# Learning to Communicate with People in Different Ways

You may work with people in the No Wrong Door (NWD) system who use various forms of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) in their interactions with you. Some of these devices might be new to you. Don't assume that you can talk with someone who uses an AAC device in the same way that you would talk with someone who doesn't. As a PCC professional, it's important for you to learn about various devices and aids so that you can be prepared when you have to communicate with a person who uses one of them. If it's your first time communicating with an AAC device, just let the person know. They will probably teach you how to use the AAC device because it's in their best interest to help you as best as they can.

# Communicating with Someone Who Uses A Device or Aid (1/3)

You just learned about some augmentative and adaptive communication (AAC) devices and aids that help people express themselves and communicate independently. Some of these devices might be new to you, and it's important to familiarize yourself with them and how they work. AAC and other communication devices and aids are integral to fostering independence and inclusion for anyone who uses them. In some cases, it might be the only way that a person can communicate. As a Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professional, it's important that you take the time to learn how to respectfully interact with people who use AAC devices to communicate.



# Communicating with Someone Who Uses A Device or Aid (2/3)

When talking with someone who uses an AAC device, keep the following in mind:

- If it's your first time communicating with someone who uses an AAC device, let them know. It's in their best interest to be patient with you and to help you as best as they can.
- Conversations will take longer, so allow more time to communicate with the person.
- Speak and look directly at the person using the AAC, even if there is a parent, caregiver, spouse, or other person who has accompanied them participating in the conversation. If the person doesn't make eye contact with you, don't take it personally. It may be related to their culture, personality, communication style, or disability.

# Communicating with Someone Who Uses A Device or Aid (3/3)

- Talk slowly and ask one question at a time, but don't limit your conversation to just asking simple yes or no questions.
- Resist the urge to finish a person's sentence or interrupt.
- Don't be afraid to ask for clarification if needed, and don't pretend to understand what the person is saying. Rephrase or repeat a question or answer as necessary.

You will learn more tips on effective communication later in this lesson.

# Tips for Communicating with Diverse Populations

As a Person-Centered Counseling professional, you will work with many different individuals. This includes, but is not limited to, people with disabilities of all ages, older adults, parents of children who need services, veterans, caregivers, and others who may help a person with their decision-making.

Consider how the following tips would work with all of the diverse individuals you serve in the No Wrong Door (NWD) system, whether or not they use an augmentative and adaptive communication device or aid.

# Communication-Friendly Environments (1/2)

There are many things you can do as a Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professional to create environments that facilitate effective communication. You've learned about effective communication tips and person-centered skills and tools. In addition, there are environmental changes and broader practices that can facilitate effective communication. Start by asking the person what would be helpful for them. Take your cues from the person to create a space where they can tell you what will work best.

# Communication-Friendly Environments (2/2)

Here are some environmental changes and practices that can help with effective communication:

- Minimize background noises if the person has difficulty hearing or concentrating.
- Avoid any auditory or visual distractions that may keep a person from fully engaging in communication.
- Be mindful of any fragrances or chemicals that may interfere with the person's ability to participate in communication.
- Arrange furniture so that you and the person are face-to-face and at the same eye-level.
- Depending on the person, have your office or environment either well lit or less lit so that it will facilitate communication and help the person feel more comfortable.
- Remain consistent in the way you communicate to avoid any confusion.

# Communication Regulations under the ADA (1/4)

As part of the NWD system, you may work for a state or local agency or a nonprofit organization that serves the public. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) includes regulations on providing effective communication to various populations, including all of the groups served by Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professionals.

# Communication Regulations under the ADA (2/4)

In 2010, the Department of Justice updated their regulations for both state and local agencies, as well as nonprofit organizations. The 2014 publication, “Revised ADA Regulations: Effective Communication” states that: “The ADA requires that title II entities (state and local governments) and title III entities (businesses and nonprofit organizations that serve the public) communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities.

# Communication Regulations under the ADA (3/4)

The goal is to ensure that communication with people with these disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities.

Covered entities must provide aids and services when needed to communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities. The key to deciding what aid or service is needed to communicate effectively is to consider the nature, length, complexity, and context of the communication as well as the person's normal method(s) of communication. A person's method(s) of communication are also key. For example, sign language interpreters are effective only for people who use sign language."



# Communication Regulations under the ADA (4/4)

If you work for a covered entity, your agency or organization should be prepared to provide effective communication aids and services, as needed.

To learn more about effective communication and the updated ADA requirements, go to: <http://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm>.

For the full content of the ADA, visit:

[http://www.ada.gov/regs2010/titleIII\\_2010/titleIII\\_2010\\_regulations.htm#a303](http://www.ada.gov/regs2010/titleIII_2010/titleIII_2010_regulations.htm#a303).

# Conclusion and Lesson Review

- Every culture has its own unique way of communicating, so communicating effectively with people from different cultures is critical for PCC professionals.
- Each person's communication style and needs are different and need to be addressed individually.
- Communication can be verbal, such as speaking, or non-verbal such as writing, sign language, gestures, and body language.
- There are many different augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, aids, and technologies, as well as environmental adaptations that can help people communicate.
- People working in the No Wrong Door (NWD) system are legally obligated to provide services and aids to ensure effective communication with people.

# Conclusion and Lesson Review

## Learning Objective

After completing this lesson, you will be able to identify and describe different ways to communicate, including aids, devices, adaptations, and tips that can help facilitate effective communication. You will also be able to describe the legal obligation to provide access to communication for people served in the NWD system.

## Reflection on Learning Objective

Directions: Review the objective(s) on this page. Write down your answers to the following questions.

1. What did you learn in this lesson that you felt was important?
2. What will you do differently because of the content in this lesson?