



**Health Equity Portfolio**

Office of Health Equity  
Office of Rural Health  
Office of People, Culture, and Belonging

**Community and  
Partner Engagement  
Tool for Communities  
and Partners**

## Cultural Humility Practices



### Background

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) manages the delivery of health and human-related services for all North Carolinians, especially our most vulnerable citizens – children, elderly, disabled, and low-income families. Our mission is to work collaboratively with partners to improve the health, safety, and well-being of all North Carolinians.

Improving health outcomes requires community, partnership, commitment, collaboration and other factors. A key component to successful community engagements and partnerships includes individuals who are culturally competent and display cultural humility.

### Key Definitions:

1. **Cultural Competence:** Cultural competence can be defined as the ability of an individual to understand and respect values, attitudes, and beliefs from different cultures and understand how to address differences appropriately in policies, programs, practices, and quality of services. Cultural competence includes gaining the skills that enable effective and equitable services for diverse populations.<sup>1</sup> Cultural competence is an ongoing process of intellectual curiosity, intentional learning, and critical thinking.<sup>2</sup>
2. **Community and Partner Engagement:** Community and partner engagement can be defined as a mutual and purposeful exchange of lived experience, acquired skills, and genuine trust among partners and communities working together to achieve a common goal ([NCDHHS Community & Partner Engagement Guide](#), page 5).

<sup>1</sup> <https://nccc.georgetown.edu/curricula/culturalcompetence.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cvims.org/community/cultural-competency/>

3. **Cultural Humility:** Cultural humility is active engagement in an ongoing process of self-reflection, in which individuals seek to examine their personal background, reflect on how interpersonal relationships are impacted by biases, and gain deeper realization, understanding, and respect of cultural differences through active inquiry, reflection, and openness.<sup>3</sup>

**Purpose:** This document provides community-based organizations a recommended list of how to practice cultural humility. Cultural humility is the lifelong commitment to self-reflection and maintaining relationships based on mutual trust and respect.<sup>4</sup> Understanding and practicing cultural humility will help you create and maintain meaningful and trusting partnerships with communities, groups, and organizations.

**Timing:** Review these recommended practices every three months.

**Objective:** To provide examples of how individuals can practice cultural humility.

### Checklist

Self-Reflection & Monitoring Practices	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Show a commitment to lifelong learning of cultural competency and cultural humility.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reflect on your own identity, cultural norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Examine your own personal <b>biases</b> , <sup>5</sup> stereotypes, and prejudices.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Practice self-monitoring by acknowledging your biases, admitting to mistakes, and taking responsibility for improvement.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reflect on how you interact with others (e.g., your body language, your tone, the words you use, how often you listen before speaking, how you impact the environment and culture around you, how you make other people feel, etc.).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assess how decisions are made with the <b>community</b> <sup>6</sup> you're working with. Is everyone involved in making decisions?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask yourself if your actions match your beliefs and values.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish a lifelong commitment to evaluating your behavior and thoughts.

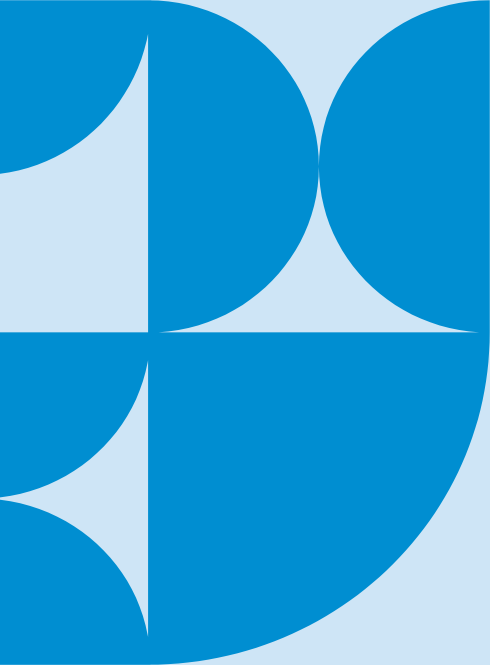
<sup>3</sup> [Principle 1: Embrace cultural humility and community engagement. \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/principles/1-embrace-cultural-humility-and-community-engagement/)

<sup>4</sup> [NCDHHS Community & Partner Engagement Guide, page 13.](#)

<sup>5</sup> "Bias is a human trait resulting from our tendency and need to classify individuals into categories as we strive to quickly process information and make sense of the world." (Understanding Bias: A Resource Guide (justice.gov))

<sup>6</sup> A community is defined as a group of people who have self-identified and/or aligned interests. Communities often share geographies, characteristics, values, beliefs, cultural, and/or a sense of belonging ([NCDHHS Community & Partner Engagement Guide, page 5](#)).





**Cultural Competency Resources:**

1. [Are You Practicing Cultural Humility? – The Key To Success In Cultural Competence](#)
2. [What is Cultural Humility? The Basics](#)
3. [CLAS, Cultural Competency and Cultural Humility \(hhs.gov\)](#)
4. [Understanding Bias: A Resource Guide \(justice.gov\)](#)

**Checklist continued**

Growing Your Cultural Humility Practices	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Listen more than you speak. Individuals know more than you do about their experience and their needs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Actively work toward developing positive attitudes toward cultural differences.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commit to gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Speak up if you notice that all individuals do not have an equal voice. Speaking up and standing up for others is an important part of community.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop partnerships and relationships with individuals and groups who speak up and stand up for others.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Be “other-oriented” by putting the thoughts, needs, and feelings of others first, without forgetting your own needs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Attend to individual’s cultural backgrounds while thinking about your own biases and privileges.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop positive relationships by encouraging people to share their cultural perspectives.

**Common Risks /Pitfalls to Consider:**

1. Thinking that actively practicing cultural humility is only when engaging with others, when in fact, most cultural humility practices are internal and ongoing.
2. Fighting the urge to judge when others describe their lived experience.
3. When reflecting on what you hear from others, avoid qualifiers such as “but...” or “not everyone is/acts that way.”
4. Thinking that because you are culturally competent, you have cultural humility, when in fact, cultural competency and cultural humility are different.



**For More Information, Visit:**

1. [NCDHHS Office of Health Equity](#)
2. [Community and Partner Engagement | NCDHHS](#)

