

FAMILY VOICES[®]

National Center for
Family♥Professional Partnerships



PROMISING PRACTICES IN CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Promising Practices in Cultural Competence was a two-phase project that allowed Family Voices to partner with diverse families, Family-to-Family Health Information Centers (F2F HICs), Family Voices State Affiliate Organizations (SAOs), and other organizations supporting families to identify, document, and share information about promising practices to effectively support families from underserved racial, ethnic, and rural communities. This brief summarizes some key aspects of what the exemplars learned through their outreach and service to diverse and underserved communities.

Phase 1: IDENTIFYING ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Five F2F organizations conducted focus groups to **learn from diverse families** what practices they perceived as exemplifying culturally competent family-centered family/professional partnerships. The following organizations and communities participated in this phase of the project:

- HI: Pacific Islander (Hilopa'a Family-to-Family Health Information Center)
- SD: Native American/rural (South Dakota Parent Connection)
- MD: African-American/urban (Parents Place of Maryland)
- NJ: Latina immigrant/urban (Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey)
- CA: Asian/mix (Family Voices of California)

The focus groups identified **five essential elements of cultural competence** that were used in phase 2 to identify promising practices. These elements were used to develop a rubric for exemplar organizations to identify their own areas of strength and share their promising practices.

The five essential elements were:

- **Provision of language access**
- **Office environments reflect the diversity of families**
- **Supportive staff reflect diverse populations**
- **Connecting families to other families with shared/similar experiences and background**
- **Providing opportunities for diverse families to share their opinions and feedback**

Phase 2: EXEMPLARS

Six organizations reported on their promising practices, lessons learned, and steps to success. The six exemplar organizations were:

- Open Doors for Multicultural Families (WA)
- Families Together, Inc. (KS)
- Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (NC)
- Texas Children's Health Plan
- Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (NJ)
- PACER Center (MN)

EXEMPLARY PRACTICES FOR CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Provision of language access:

- Exemplar organizations expressed a preference for providing services directly in the family's home language (rather than through a translator) as much as possible. Organizations employed multi-lingual staff, and engaged diverse Board members and parent partners to provide services in additional languages.
- Exemplars leveraged technology (for example, Google Translate, and simultaneous translation via headset) to make services available in additional languages.

Office environments reflect the diversity of families:

- Exemplars emphasized the importance of diverse, friendly staff, who make people feel welcome in their office even if they aren't able to greet them in their home language.
- Posters and written materials reflected the diversity of the community in photos and language.

Staff and partnerships reflect diverse populations:

- Exemplars recruited staff, Board members, and organizational partners to represent diversity and build on existing relationships in diverse communities.
- Exemplars provided ongoing diversity training for all staff, board, volunteers and professionals; offer opportunities to learn additional languages and regularly assess and train for cultural competency and language skills

Connecting families to other families with shared experiences & similar backgrounds:

- Exemplars offered multiple opportunities for families to connect with each other, generally providing a blend of one-to-one support (direct services, family match, and home visiting); training activities (workshops, seminars, and conferences); support groups; and special events (seasonal events, fun activities, and community gatherings).
- Offered activities focus on specific diverse communities, while others are within the community at large.

Providing opportunities for diverse families to share their opinions and feedback:

- Exemplars welcome feedback from diverse families, by offering focus groups and surveys in multiple languages.
- Exemplars implemented suggestions from families to improve the quality and appropriateness of their services.

Family Voices recognizes the urgent need for high-quality, culturally appropriate services for all families. The Promising Practices project provides the opportunity to highlight success stories and best practices for serving diverse families. These organizations saw a need and were determined to find a way to fill it and ensure that families receive the help they needed, regardless of culture, race, or language spoken. The exemplars shared a common understanding that united them – an understanding that to serve families with children with disabilities effectively, it is necessary to find a way to respect the culture, ethnicity, and language of every family.

To read the full briefs on these Promising Practices go to the Family Voices, National Center for Family Professional Partnerships webpage: <http://www.fv-ncfpp.org/activities/promisingpractices/>

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Family Voices National Center for Family/Professional Partnerships • Mailing Address: P.O. Box 37188, Albuquerque, NM 87176
Physical Address: 3701 San Mateo Blvd NE, Suite 103, Albuquerque, NM 87110 • Phone: 505-872-4774 • Toll Free: 888-835-5669
Fax: 505-872-4780 Internet: www.familyvoices.org • www.fv-ncfpp.org • [www.familyvoices.org/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/familyvoices)