

Communication between Staff and Community Health Workers (CHWs)



OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, participants will be able to:

- Identify the different ways that people communicate and the factors that influence the quality of communication
- Implement strategies to promote effective communication among a diverse staff
- Promote cultural humility in the workplace
- Use meetings to support communication among staff



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Prior to the session, draw the Flower Power diagram on a flip chart sheet and place it on the wall.
2. Welcome participants and review objectives (slide 2).
3. Review the types of communication (slides 3–5).
4. Facilitate the Flower Power Group Activity
 - State that power is dynamic and relational, rather than absolute.
 - As a group, discuss each category and the characteristics of those who have most power in society. In the outside circle of the petal, fill in the dominant characteristics. (For example, which gender or ethnic group has the most power).
 - Hand out Flower Power worksheet. Ask participants to write in the outer circles of their flowers the dominant characteristics that were discussed by the group.
 - Ask participants to work individually to write their own identities on each petal/category in the flower's inner circle.
 - Facilitate a discussion using the following questions:
 - How many of your individual characteristics are different from the dominant identity? Which characteristics cannot be changed? What does this say about your own power or potential for power?
 - What does the exercise reveal about us as a group? What are the differences and similarities in relation to the dominant power? How can that influence our work?
 - What does this exercise tell us about identity and power more broadly?
5. Review slides on effective communication and cultural humility, facilitating a discussion (slides 6–9).

6. Conduct the small group activity, Cultural Self-Assessment (see slide 9 for details).
7. Review slides on how to use meetings to support communication among staff (slides 10–11).
8. Wrap-up. Ask for any final reflections. Review handout on strategies for orienting non-CHW staff. Address any questions written on the parking lot sheet if you created one. Provide the extra reading recommendation, Sinai Urban Health Institute (SUHI) Guidelines. Share some highlights from this resource if time and interest.



Method(s) of Instruction

Large group discussion, individual and group activity



Estimated time

60 minutes



Key Concepts

Communication, feedback, cultural humility, power, meetings



Materials

- Computer with internet access and projector
- PowerPoint slides
- Flip charts
- Markers

Handouts

- Strategies for Orienting non-CHW Staff
- Flower Power Worksheet



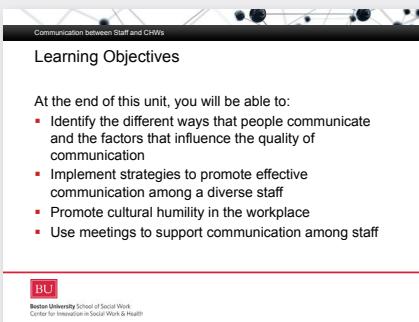
Resources

Sinai Urban Health Institute (SUHI) practice guide (Reference sections 3.1 and 3.2) <https://www.sinai.org/sites/default/files/SUHI%20Best%20Practice%20Guidelines%20for%20CHW%20Programs.pdf>

Communication between Staff and Community Health Workers (CHWs)



SLIDE 1



SLIDE 2

Review the objectives.

Ask participants why they think this subject is important?

Encourage participants to share their thoughts about CHWs and communication.

Suggested questions to ask to open up discussion:

- Why do we communicate?
- Do we communicate differently with different work colleagues or clients?
- How many ways are there to communicate? You may want to write these down.
- What's your favorite way to communicate? For example, face-to-face versus email.
- Do you remember a time when you have been misunderstood or you misunderstood somebody else? What happened? Would have a different medium of communication prevented the misunderstanding?



SLIDE 3

Have volunteers read listed types of communication and give a definition or example in their own words.

Ask participants if there is a type of communication they would like to add?

Compare the list on the slide to the list the participants shared.

Ask how they think communication would change in different scenarios?

Ask if the way we communicate affects our message?

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Communication between Staff and CHWs

How Do We Communicate?

Verbal	Body Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Face-to-face, phone, presentations• Tone of voice, pronunciation, choice of words• Succinct vs. elaborate• Implicit vs. Explicit• Style – passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, assertive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Posture• Facial expressions• Hand gestures• Touch• Eye contact

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SLIDE 4

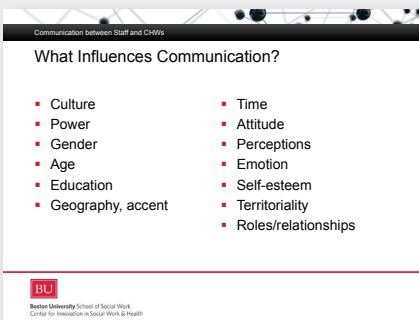
Ask, “How do we communicate?”

Review the verbal and non-verbal characteristics of communication.

Invite participants to share examples of each.

Ask if there are any questions? Anything missing? Do CHWs communicate differently than other staff? Do participants recognize any challenges?

- As part of the conversation, tell participants to keep CHWs in mind and how styles can be different
- Implicit/ Indirect → High-context = highly coded (note in some cultures such as Asian, Middle-Eastern)
- Explicit/ Direct → Low-context = to the point, explicit (note for some cultures: American, European)
- The use of nonverbal cues with verbal communication helps to deliver the message more effectively.



Communication between Staff and CHWs

What Influences Communication?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Culture• Power• Gender• Age• Education• Geography, accent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time• Attitude• Perceptions• Emotion• Self-esteem• Territoriality• Roles/relationships
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SLIDE 5

Ask participants:

- What influences communication?
- Why do these things impact communication?
- How do they influence communication?
- What influences communication with their CHWs?
- Can you think of anything else? If so, how do these other factors influence communication? Ask participants to give examples.

Facilitate the Flower Power activity.

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Communication between Staff and CHWs

What Do You Need to Communicate Effectively?

- Trust
- Common language
- Organizational culture
- Cultural Humility

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SLIDE 6

Ask, “What do you need to communicate effectively?”

Discuss each bullet point individually:

- How do you build trust among your organization or team?
- Do you use jargon or terminology specific to your organization?
- Does your organization have its own culture?
- Is there anything missing?
- What do you know about cultural humility and how it may contribute to effective communication?

Tell participants: We are going to focus on cultural humility for the next few minutes. It has an important influence on communication.

Communication between Staff and CHWs

Cultural Humility

- To practice cultural humility is to maintain a willingness to suspend what you know, or what you think you know, about a person based on generalizations about their culture.
- What you learn about another's culture stems from being open to what they themselves have determined is their personal expression of their heritage and culture.

Adapted from Craig Moncho, LMSW, <https://thesocialworkpractitioner.com/2013/08/19/cultural-humility-part-1-what-is-cultural-humility/>

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SLIDE 7

Let's review the definition of cultural humility.

Ask for a volunteer to read the definition. Facilitate discussion.

To practice cultural humility is to understand that culture is, first and foremost, an expression of self and that the process of learning about each individuals' culture is a lifelong endeavor, because no two individuals are the same; each individual is a complicated, multi-dimensional human being who can rightfully proclaim “My identity is rooted in my history and I get to say who I am.”

Communication between Staff and CHWs

How Do Supervisors Promote Cultural Humility in the Workplace?

- Recognizing the power and influence of culture
- Collecting resources on culturally diverse groups for your staff to use
 - Community Tool Box: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/enhancing-cultural-competence>
- Promoting Cultural Humility in the Workplace: <https://thesocialworkpractitioner.com/2013/08/26/cultural-humility-part-ii-promoting-cultural-humility-in-the-workplace>
- Allocating resources for leadership and staff development in the area of cultural awareness
- Conducting a cultural self-identification in-service workshop

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SLIDE 8

Ask, “How do supervisors promote cultural humility in the workplace?”

Review each bullet and facilitate discussion until there seems to be understanding.

Ask, “What is the dominant culture in your workplace? English speaking? More of one gender than another? Is there a hierarchy based on education or license (i.e. medical)?”

Note for the influence of culture: We all develop in some type of culture. Our environment determines what we learn, how we learn it, and the rules for living with others. Organizations have a “culture” of policies, procedures, programs, and processes, and incorporate certain values, beliefs, assumptions, and customs. A culturally competent organization brings together knowledge about different groups of people and transforms it into standards, policies, and practices that make everything work.

Ask, “What kind of materials can you bring into the workplace? Where would you put them? How would you share?”

Note for resources: There are many free online resources, as well as printed materials. Visit the library and talk with people at similar organizations to learn about resources.

Ask, “What can you do to support training and staff development?”

Note for staff development: Host a brown bag lunch to get your staff involved in discussion and activities about cultural competence, workshops, ask your staff about their perception of development needs. Remember: Professional development should not be limited job-specific trainings but also to soft skills such as cultural humility.

Note for in-service workshop: One of the best possible ways to help staff grasp the importance and power of cultural humility is to make it personal. As a supervisor or program manager you can lead an in-service style conversation where staff members self-report how they differ from the cultural stereotypes others may believe about them. In so doing they can come to better understand the concept of a personal culture, providing them with a theoretical framework for seeing the ways in which their clients and colleagues may be both a product of, and separate from, their respective cultures.

Ask, “How else can we promote cultural humility?”

Conducting a cultural awareness in-service workshop could be an effective team building exercise. We’ll share a couple of ideas of how you can go about this.

Normalize not knowing. As supervisors and managers we have to help our staff become more comfortable with the idea of not knowing. How many meetings have you led where you asked “Any questions?” and no one raised their hand? Then, you were followed back to your desk by one or more staffers with questions. This scenario typifies the level of discomfort individuals have admitting that there are things they don’t know. Everyone wants to appear competent, and this is no less true with cultural competence. What puts the humility in cultural humility is the reality that when it comes to understanding our clients and staff and the various cultural influences that helped shape them, there is much more that is unknown than known. Not knowing doesn’t mean you aren’t intelligent, it means you’ve not encountered it before, either abstractly or experientially. Supervisors and managers, we need to instill in our staff the understanding that it is not only okay to not know—it is a necessary condition for growth, central to the practice of cultural humility.

Share the resources: Community Tool Box—<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/enhancing-cultural-competence>

Promoting Cultural Humility in the Workplace: <https://thesocialworkpractitioner.com/2013/08/26/cultural-humility-part-ii-promoting-cultural-humility-in-the-workplace/>


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Cultural Self-Assessment

Think of demographic questionnaires you have filled out in the past.

1. What "check boxes" would you choose on a questionnaire? (i.e. – White/Black, Male/Female, Other, etc.)
2. What are some of the cultural qualities and or stereotypes ascribed to someone of your background?
3. In what ways do you differ from those stereotypes?

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SLIDE 9

Conduct a small group activity.

Tell participants: One of the best ways to help staff grasp the importance and power of cultural humility is to make it personal. As a supervisor or program manager you can lead an in-service style conversation where staff members self-report how they differ from the cultural stereotypes others may believe about them. In so doing they can come to better understand the concept of a personal culture, providing them with a theoretical framework for seeing the ways in which their clients may be both a product of, and separate from, their respective cultures. The good news is that as a leader, you get to go first!

Have participants form small groups and briefly discuss the questions on the slide with each other.


To wrap up the activity, tell participants that the inherent limitation of practicing from a purely culturally competent standpoint will be revealed, and a deeper understanding of cultural humility promoted. There are certainly other kinds of culture-based questions you may or may not want to pose, depending on the size and comfort level of your staff, time considerations, etc. Even if you limit the conversation to these three questions, the point will be made.

Communication between Staff and CHWs

Using Meetings to Support Communication Among Staff

Staff meetings:

- Promote transparency and accountability
- Bring different voices to the table, especially during problem solving
- Help staff understand organizational goals
- Improve collaboration
- Create opportunity to bond and celebrate
- Provide opportunities for leadership

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SLIDE 10

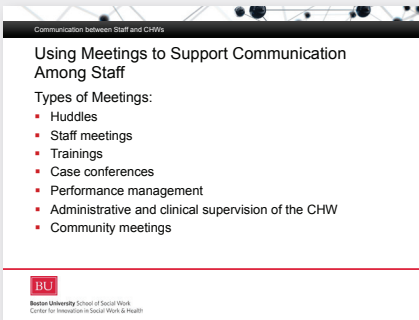
Another role of supervisors is to facilitate communication between CHWs and other members of the team.

Review the slide.

Ask:

- Why are these characteristics of meetings important for CHWs to understand?
- How can staff meetings create an opportunity for a CHW to become integrated into the larger organization?
- How can supervisors prepare CHWs for staff meetings and encourage them to participate?

Multidisciplinary staff meetings are a great way to highlight the role and value of the CHW. It is also an opportunity for CHW to become integrated into the larger organization. However, this may not be a part of a CHWs traditional skill set. It will be important for the supervisor to prepare the CHW for meetings and encourage them to participate in meetings as an equal team member.



SLIDE 11

Review and discuss each type of meeting that CHWs may participate in.

Ask, “What should CHWs be contributing and taking away from each type of meeting? How do we prepare CHWs for each type of meeting?”

Ask for experiences and suggestions.

It is important to schedule regular administrative and clinical meetings with CHWs under your supervision.

Supervisors should encourage CHWs to collaborate with other staff members such as the primary care team, case managers, housing specialist, and mental health therapists.

Huddles are less formal and are a great opportunity for CHWs to contribute.

Supervisors need to provide encouragement and support. Ask, “What are some ways you can support a CHW?”

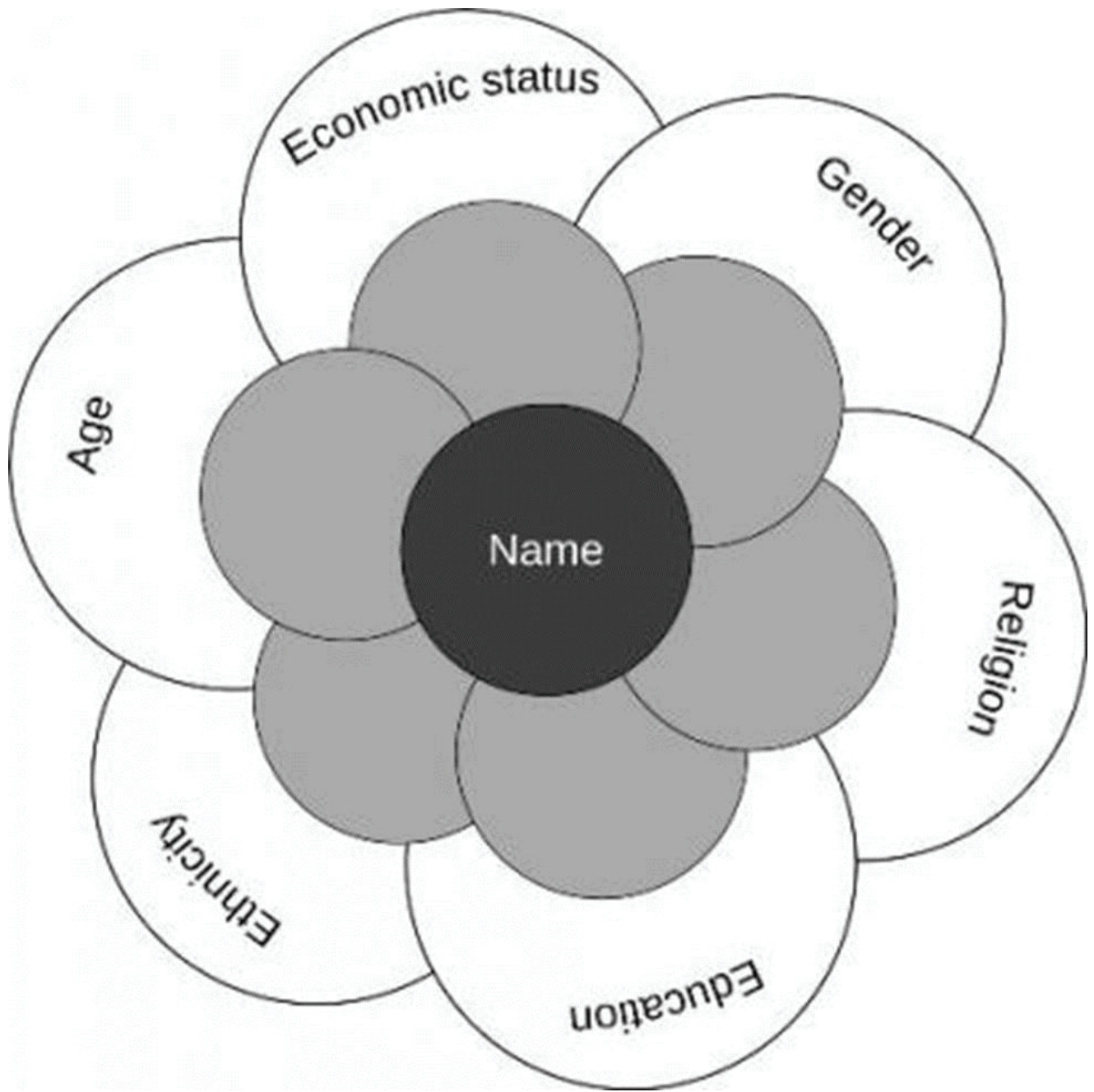
Equally as important is scheduling and holding regular, weekly supervision times with CHWs for administrative and clinical supervision.

Strategies for Orienting non-CHW Staff

It is critical to the success and sustainability of Community Health Worker (CHW) programs that all employees within organizations understand the unique roles, philosophy, and goals of CHW programs. This understanding will also create a workplace culture that is more likely to value CHW work. It also helps to set the stage for new employees to view CHWs as their colleagues and coworkers.

- Conduct an in-service presentation/training during an all-staff meeting.
- Set up a series of individual meetings between CHW and non-CHW staff.
- Make sure every employee has access to a copy of the program model, the CHW program, policies and procedures.
- During supervision, test non-CHW staff for understanding of the CHW role.
- Present the CHW role as yet another way to support our patients—show non-CHW staff how the CHW role will enhance their understanding of the lives of people with HIV.
- Make sure non-CHW staff are making ongoing referrals to the CHW program and marketing the CHW program appropriately.

Flower Power Worksheet



Acknowledgements

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