

GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORKERS IN CULTURAL ASSESSMENT

- Consider all clients as individuals first, as members of minority status, and then as members of a specific ethnic group.
- Never assume that a person's ethnic identity tells you anything about his or her cultural values or patterns of behavior.
- Treat all "facts" you have ever heard or read about cultural values and traits as hypothesis to be tested anew with each client. Turn facts into questions.
- Remember that all minority group people in this society are bicultural at least. The percentages may be 90 -10 in either direction, but they still have had the task of integrating two value systems that are often in conflict. The conflicts involved in being cultural may override any specific cultural content.
- Some aspects of a client's cultural history, values, and lifestyles are relevant to your work with the client. Others may be simply interesting to you as a professional. Do not prejudge what areas are relevant.
- Identify strengths in the client's cultural orientation which can be built upon. Assist the client in identifying areas that create social or psychological conflict related to biculturalism and seek to reduce dissonance in those areas.
- Know your own attitudes about cultural pluralism and whether you tend to promote assimilation into the dominant society values or stress the maintenance of traditional cultural beliefs and practices.
- Engage your client actively in the process of learning what cultural content should be considered.
- Keep in mind that there are no substitutes for good clinical skills, empathy, caring and a sense of humor.

Green, James W. *Cultural Awareness in the Human Services*. Englewood cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1982. p. 181-183.