Guidance for Culturally Adapting Gatekeeper Trainings

Gatekeeper trainings are a popular and effective type of suicide prevention program. However, they may be less effective when the training is not adapted to meet the specific cultural needs of the community in which they are used. This tool provides a series of questions to guide the cultural adaptation of gatekeeper training programs and to improve the community ownership, cultural fit, and effectiveness of the training.

When we make cultural adaptations to a program, the focus should be on how the program is communicated and implemented. We should strive to find out as much as we can about the cultural perspectives, strengths, resources, and environmental assets of the cultural group, honoring the culture first and foremost. We can then use this information in a mindful and respectful way to help us communicate about and implement the program within a cultural framework that is appropriate for the specific community.

> **Cultural Adaptations –**
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> **Changes made to programs so that they better fit the unique needs of the community and culture in which they are implemented while remaining true to the program's core elements**

Learn more about culturally competent approaches from the SPRC website.

Consult with Program Developers to Ensure Adaptations Adhere to Core Elements

Before making changes to a gatekeeper training program, it is important to consult with the program's developer to ensure that the changes you are considering do not weaken or remove any of the program's core elements. Core elements are the fundamental aspects of the curriculum that are vital to the program's effectiveness. Any adaptations to the curriculum should enhance its effectiveness with a specific audience while maintaining the effective practices of the original program.

Questions to Guide the Cultural Adaptation of Gatekeeper Training Programs

The need for and the range of cultural adaptations for gatekeeper training programs will vary, depending on the particular program and the setting in which it is being used. Consequently, there is no uniform set of adaptations that must or should be made. Rather, program adaptations should be guided by a series of questions to help determine what changes are needed.

The following questions were developed based on various recommendations in the literature on cultural adaptations to evidence-based practices in mental health services, treatment, and prevention. They are intended to help people who conduct gatekeeper training programs do so in a more culturally responsive and effective way.

The questions are categorized under these four headings:

1. General Considerations
2. Delivery of Training(s)
3. Shared Group Considerations
4. Follow-up and Referral Network

General Considerations

These general questions can help you gather information about the population with which you will be implementing the training.

1. Culturally speaking, who are the people being trained? Some populations may share multiple cultures, so be as specific as possible. Possible groups can include (but are not limited to) race, ethnicity, spirituality, deaf and hard of hearing, LGBTQ2S, gender identity, tribal identity, military/veteran, socioeconomic status, and educational level.

2. Given the group(s) you are trying to reach with the gatekeeper training, what aspects of their culture will impact the way the gatekeeper training is received and how the information is used? Regarding general cultural considerations, ask the following questions:
    *   What are the group's beliefs and/or attitudes about mental health and suicide?
    *   What are the group's beliefs and/or attitudes about intervening when people are showing warning signs of suicide?
    *   What are the group's beliefs and/or attitudes about using mental health services?
    *   What are other nontraditional services the group may be using when supporting people at risk for suicide?

3. What are your objectives in training this particular group? What gatekeeper training program(s) will you use? You can access the tool *Choosing a Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training Program – A Comparison Table* for a summary of suicide-specific gatekeeper training programs, including information on training duration, target population(s), formats, and objectives.

4. What are the core elements of a gatekeeper training? How will the cultural group respond to those core elements? Consider the following core elements of a gatekeeper training and how they will be received by the group you are trying to reach:
    *   How mental health is described
    *   How suicide prevention is discussed
    *   What processes for referrals are recommended
    *   What mental health services are recommended

    These core elements are essential to gatekeeper trainings, so the way they are discussed and the strategies recommended for addressing them in your community should be considered.

5. Are culturally appropriate mental health services and other resources available for the community? It is important to have culturally appropriate supports in place to support the group(s) at risk.

Delivery of Training(s)

Considering the following questions can help ensure that your training is delivered in a way that is culturally responsive to your audience.

1. How will trainings be delivered? For example, will it be a face-to-face event, a webinar, or a self-paced online training?
2. Does this cultural group have a preference about how the training should be delivered? How will you accommodate those preferences?

3. Are the techniques that suit different adult learning styles built into your training delivery? Do the techniques you use reflect the predominant learning style(s) of the people being trained? It is generally good to mix instructional methods in order to address multiple learning styles as they will also vary among individuals within a culture.

4. How much time do you have? Is the time available flexible? Are there differences in perceptions of time? Are there time constraints? If so, do the time constraints allow you to meet the needs of the people being trained?

5. Have you addressed the cultural needs of this group in the past through other trainings or programmatic efforts? If so, in what way(s) did you address these needs? What was the feedback from the group on the training? Are there current contacts or "champions" within this group who can help promote or enhance your training effort?

6. Have you identified strengths within this cultural group that can enhance the training? If so, what are those strengths?

7. Have training methods and materials been translated appropriately? Are they easy to understand and appropriate for the given culture? Can key terms used in training be shared and understood in the local language? Are you using examples specific to the culture or community being trained rather than generic ones?

8. Are you describing the topics of mental health, suicide, referral to services, and mental health services using language and practices that are appropriate for the given cultural group?

For additional steps and examples see *Creating Linguistically and Culturally Competent Suicide Prevention Materials*.

Shared Group Considerations
When planning your training, it is important to gather information about the group, including cultural strengths and other information relevant to working with that population.

1. What other relevant information should you consider when working with this population? For example, are there historical, environmental, or other factors that may contribute to your understanding of this community? How will this knowledge be taken into consideration?

2. Are the people selected to conduct the gatekeeper training knowledgeable in the help-seeking patterns of the cultural group?

3. Have you obtained feedback from the target population about the cultural adaptations you made to the training? Are additional adjustments needed as a result of this feedback? Be sure to include the community or cultural group when adapting a training.

Developing a work group to guide the process can be useful. See *Creating Linguistically and Culturally Competent Suicide Prevention Materials* for guidance on developing a work group to assist in this process.

Follow-up and Referral Network
The following three questions related to both effectiveness and cultural adaptations should be clarified before gatekeeper trainings are implemented. These questions are based on SAMHSA-supported recommendations for improving implementation of gatekeeper training programs. See *Recommendations for Youth Suicide Prevention Training for Early Identification and Referral (Gatekeeper Training)* for additional information.

1. Do you have plans to keep gatekeepers engaged and active in suicide prevention through offering support and empowerment?
2. How will trained gatekeepers have the opportunity to voice their opinions or offer feedback on future trainings/activities regarding this population?
3. Gatekeeper trainings should be accompanied by a list of referral resources where trainees can send individuals in need. Do the referral service providers have cultural competency in working with this population? Are other resources and supports specific to this population included in the referral list?

These questions should guide you in tailoring gatekeeper training so that it best fits your community. You may add other questions that pertain to the population you are trying to reach. Focus groups, interviews, and pilot testing are evaluation techniques that can also help you identify desirable cultural adaptations.

Remember, it is important to maintain the core elements of the training while adapting it to the particular culture, beliefs, and realities of the group you are training.

Additional Resources

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