



## SPRC • Suicide Prevention Resource Center

### Guidance for Culturally Adapting Gatekeeper Trainings

Gatekeeper trainings are a popular and effective type of suicide prevention program. However, their effectiveness can suffer 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, utilization, and effectiveness of the training.

When we make cultural adaptations to a program, the focus should be on *how* the program is 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. We can then use this information in a mindful and respectful way to help us implement the program within a cultural framework that is appropriate for the particular community.

*Simply put, cultural adaptations are 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 their core elements.*

#### 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 core elements essential to the program's effectiveness, but rather enhance its effectiveness with a particular audience.

#### Questions to Guide the Cultural Adaptation of Gatekeeper Training Programs

The need for and range of cultural adaptations for gatekeeper training programs will vary depending upon 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 whether, and if so what, changes are needed.

The following questions were developed based on various recommendations in the literature on the topic of cultural adaptations to evidence-based practices in mental health services, treatment, and prevention. They are intended to help those who conduct gatekeeper training programs do so in a more culturally responsive and effective way. The questions are categorized under four headings: (1) General Considerations, (2) Delivery of Trainings, (3) Shared Group Considerations, and (4) Follow-Up and Referral Network.

## General Questions

These general questions help you gather knowledge 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 categories: race, ethnicity, deaf or hard of hearing, LGBTQ2S, military, college (undergraduate/graduate/faculty/staff)
2. What gatekeeper training program(s) will be used?
3. What are the core elements of the training? (Core elements are fundamental aspects that are essential to a program's message and therefore should not be changed or adapted; if possible, consult with the training developer to identify the core elements.)
4. What are your objectives in training this particular cultural group?

## Delivery of Training(s)

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

1. How will trainings be delivered? (Face to face, webinar, self-paced online training, etc.)
2. Does this cultural group have a preference (that you are aware of) as to how the training should be delivered? How will you accommodate those preferences?
3. Are techniques that suit different adult learning styles built in to your training delivery? Do the techniques you use reflect the predominant learning style or styles of those being trained? (It is generally good to mix instructional methods in order to address multiple learning styles, as these will also vary amongst individuals within cultures.)
4. Are there time constraints? How much time do you have? Is the time available flexible? Do time constraints still allow you to meet the needs of those being trained?
5. Have you addressed the cultural needs of this group in the past through other trainings or other programmatic efforts? If so, in what way(s) did you address these cultural 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 easily understood and appropriate for the given culture? Can key terms used in training be shared and understood in the local language?

### Shared Group Considerations

When planning your training, it is important to gather information about the cultural group, including cultural strengths and other information relevant to working with this 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 indicated as a result of this feedback?

### Follow-Up and Referral Network

Three key questions related to both effectiveness and cultural adaptations should be clarified before gatekeeper trainings are implemented. These questions are based on a set of SAMHSA-supported recommendations for improving implementation of gatekeeper training programs. (See "Recommendations for Youth Suicide Prevention Training for Early Identification and Referral (Gatekeeper Training)" in the Additional Resources Section)

1. Do you have plans to keep gatekeepers engaged through offering support and empowerment to ensure that they remain active in suicide prevention?
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?

The above questions should prompt you to tailor gatekeeper training in a way that best fits your community, and you may wish to add other questions that pertain to the particular population with which you are working. Focus groups, surveys, pilot testing, and other evaluation techniques can also help identify desirable cultural adaptations. **The important thing is to keep the core elements of the training intact, while adapting it to the particular culture, beliefs, and realities of the group you are training.**

## Additional Resources

Bigfoot, D., & Braden, J., (2007). Adapting Evidence-Based Treatments for Use with American Indian and Native Alaskan Children and Youth. *Traumatic Stress/Child Welfare*. Focal Point, research, policy, & practice in children's mental health. 19–22.

Isaacs, R., Huang, L., Hernandez, M., Echo-Hawk, H., (2005). The Road to Evidence: The Intersection of Evidence-Based Practices and Cultural Competence in Children's Mental Health. National Alliance of Multi-Ethnic Behavioral Health Associations.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Lessons Learned Working Group. Recommendations for Youth Suicide Prevention Training for Early Identification and Referral (Gatekeeper Training). Available online at:

<http://www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/library/RecommendationsGatekeeperTraining.pdf>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center. Comparison Table of Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training Programs. Available online at:

[http://www.sprc.org/library\\_resources/items/comparison-table-suicide-prevention-gatekeeper-training-programs](http://www.sprc.org/library_resources/items/comparison-table-suicide-prevention-gatekeeper-training-programs)

Suicide Prevention Resource Center. Online Training: Choosing and Implementing a Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training Program. Available online at: <http://training.sprc.org/>

Whaley, A., & Davis, K., (2007). Cultural Competence and Evidence-Based Practice in Mental Health Services. *A Complementary Perspective*. American Psychologist. American Psychological Association. 563–572.

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