

Case Example for Cultural Competency

What does the research say?

Multiple studies in the scoping review emphasized the importance of family outreach for students with disabilities and the career exploration process.

What's an example of this research-informed practice?

One study included in the review conducted interviews with employment specialists who participated in the [Marriott Foundation's Bridges From School to Work](#), a program that aims to help students with special needs exiting high school to enter the workforce successfully. Cultural competence emerged from the interviews as one of the core attributes possessed by these specialists. This study defined cultural competence broadly as “the values, norms and traditions that affect how individuals of a particular group perceive, think, interact, behave, and make judgments about their world.” The study explicitly mentioned that cultural competence was not restricted to race or ethnicity. In the study, the employment specialists took time to learn about the cultural backgrounds of the students they worked with. Cultural competence was achieved through their consideration of both the environmental and situational factors that influenced employability (e.g., poverty, homelessness, and family support). Another important aspect of cultural competence was family communication. The employment specialists interviewed described the importance of reaching out to the families of culturally and linguistically diverse students. The employment specialists formed trusting relationships with the students and their families through respectful communication.

How can this be adapted to VR settings?

In this study, cultural competence was achieved through employment specialists' recognizing the environmental and contextual factors of students with disabilities that can influence employability. However, in order to recognize these factors, VR counselors must connect and engage with students and their families.

1. Connect with students frequently and let them know you are there and available for assistance.
 - a. Daily routines and schedules can often leave little time for regular check-ins with students. Texting is a fast, easy, and age-appropriate strategy to stay connected. VR counselors who are new to texting might first need to consider the ethics involved. For students who do not have cell phones, alternative forms of communication, such as regular email correspondences, can be leveraged.
 - b. Acknowledge and plan for the existence of cross-cultural communication issues. Cross-cultural communication involves understanding how people from different cultures communicate and perceive the world around them. Not speaking the native language of the student(s) you work with would be a prime example of a barrier to cross-cultural communication.
2. Engage with student family members and involve them in the employment process.
 - a. To engage with families, use a combination of phone calls, letters, and home visits.
 - b. Speak to families in a way that reflects respect.
 - c. Be flexible about and accommodating to the logistical barriers of family involvement.

Resources Related to Cultural Competency

Bridges from school to work. (n.d.). Retrieved April 05, 2018, from <http://www.bridgestowork.org>

Tilson, G., & Simonsen, M. (2013). The personnel factor: Exploring the personal attributes of highly successful employment specialists who work with transition-age youth. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 38*(2), 125–137. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286969489_the_personnel_factor_exploring_the_personal_attributes_of_highly_successful_employment_specialists_who_work_with_transition-age_youth