
Principles: Cultural and Linguistically Competent Services

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BACKGROUND

For people with disabilities, access to services is important to live safely in the community and lead full, productive lives.

Disability Rights California (DRC) is committed to ensuring services and supports, and information about them, are available to people with disabilities regardless of income, race, language, immigration status, culture, religious or spiritual beliefs, ethnicity, disability, health status, gender or gender identity, age, sexual orientation, location, or any other factor. DRC believes that no one should receive fewer or poorer services because of these factors. Services and supports should meet the needs of the individual and respect the individual's culture. Information about the services and supports should be provided in plain language and in the language and format the person prefers. Documents should be translated and alternative communication services should be provided consistent with state law requirements¹ so that individuals from ethnically diverse communities are provided with appropriate language access.

¹ See Government Code 11135-11139 et seq. and implementing regulations. ["Return to Main Document"](#)

PRINCIPLES

DRC will support legislative or policy actions that advance these principles and will oppose legislative or policy actions that weakens them.

1. **Provision of Services and Supports**

All service providers, private agencies, schools, and governmental agencies serving people with disabilities must offer choices and provide services that are culturally and linguistically competent.

2. **Information about Services and Supports**

Information about services and supports should be provided in clear and understandable language and at a reading level the recipient can understand, in the recipient's language of choice, and in an accessible format to the recipient. This includes information about the intake or application process, and information about service and due process rights. Documents and information should be translated and alternative communication services provided consistent with state law, to ensure that individuals from diverse communities receive necessary language access and culturally appropriate services.

3. **Equity in Services**

Departments, agencies, schools, and service providers should ensure services and supports are provided equally to people with disabilities from diverse cultural and language communities and take proactive steps to address service disparities.

Glossary of Terms

Cultural Competence: "...means services, supports or other assistance that are conducted or provided in a manner that is responsive to the beliefs, interpersonal styles, attitudes, language and behaviors of individuals who are receiving services, and in a manner that has the greatest likelihood of ensuring their maximum participation in the program." See: <https://nccc.georgetown.edu/curricula/culturalcompetence.html>.

Linguistic Competence: is "the capacity of an organization and its personnel to communicate effectively, and convey information in a manner that is easily understood by diverse audiences including persons of limited English proficiency, those who have low literacy skills or are not literate, and individuals with disabilities." (Goode & Jones, 2004)