

# Communicating Across Cultures: Cultural Competence for Public Health and Health Care Professionals

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## Abstract

The mission of the Region IV Public Health Training Center (R-IV PHTC) is, in part, to strengthen the competence of the current governmental public health workforce in HHS Region IV by providing training based on identified needs of the workforce.

The purpose of this project is to understand the relevance and effectiveness of one specific cultural competency training, *Communicating Across Cultures: Cultural Competence for Public Health and Health Care Professionals*. Using a phenomenological approach, qualitative interviews will be conducted with 12-15 randomly selected individuals who participated in the *Communicating Across Cultures: Cultural Competence for Public Health and Health Care Professionals* training between September 1, 2017 and August 31, 2018. Data will be used for program improvement.

## Background

Region IV Public Health Training Center: Funded in 2014 by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the mission of the Region IV Public Health Training Center (R-IV PHTC) is, in part, to train the governmental public health workforce in the eight states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee) that make up HHS Region IV.

Trainings offered by the R-IV PHTC cover a continuum of offerings which include Public Health Practice Academy (PHPA) trainings, a series of 6-hour, in-person, skill-based trainings. The goal of the PHPA trainings is to provide public health professionals – especially those serving underserved populations and areas – with core skills that can be used in public health practice.



Region IV Public Health  
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## Background, cont.

Council on Linkages Core Competencies: PHPA trainings are competency-based using the Council on Linkages Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals, which organizes its competencies into eight domain areas one of which is cultural competency skills.

## Need for Public Health Training

According to the 2017 PH WINS<sup>1</sup> survey, only 14% (11% in Region IV) of the public health workforce has formal public health training. Additionally, 22% of the public health workforce is planning to retire in the next five years and 25% are planning to leave in the next year for reasons due to something other than retirement. These two metrics (lack of formal public health training and high turnover) emphasize the importance of training programs like the Region IV PHTC in providing the public health workforce with skills critical to doing their job functions.

## Cultural Competency Training

From 2014-2018, the R-IV PHTC offered 10 PHPA trainings, reaching 390 public health workers, that were categorized as addressing cultural competency skills. As the R-IV PHTC has worked with each state's public health agency to determine priority training needs, issues around diversity and inclusion have emerged as one of the top training needs.

Communicating Across Cultures: One specific training, *Communicating Across Cultures: Cultural Competence for Public Health and Health Care Professionals*, was offered four times from September 1, 2017 through August 31, 2018, reaching 190 individuals.

Course Description: This course provides learners with foundational knowledge and practical tools to improve cross-cultural communication. It includes a discussion of the role of health disparities, health literacy and social determinants of health. Participants gain an understanding of the legal, professional and ethical rationale for providing culturally competent services. Participants have the opportunity to learn and practice techniques, including the LEARN model and strategies for working with medical interpreters. Finally, participants receive guidance in assessing and improving their organization's cultural competence.

## Cultural Competency Training, cont.

Learning Objectives: By the end of the training, participants will be able to:

- Discuss the need for culturally responsive services.
- Identify strategies for communicating across cultures.
- Discuss legal requirements and national standards for language access.
- Identify best practices to enhance language access.
- Demonstrate effective skills for working with interpreters.
- Develop a cultural competence plan.

## Purpose of Project

The purpose of this evaluation is to better understand the relevance and effectiveness of the R-IV PHTC's cultural competency training and to explore how R-IV PHTC participants applied skills learned in this training to their current jobs.

## Evaluation Model

The evaluation model used in this project is Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation<sup>2</sup>. This project will focus on Level 3, Behavior.

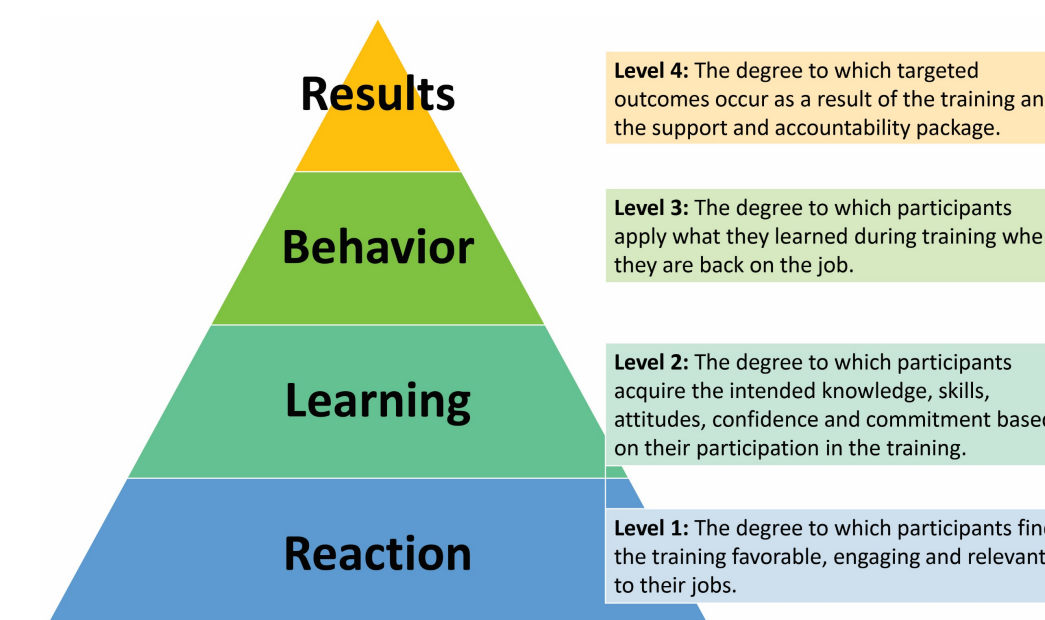


Figure 1. Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Evaluation

## Use of Data Findings

Data will be used for program improvement as the R-IV PHTC reformulates the training and identifies a new instructor.

## Methodology

This project will use a phenomenological approach. Qualitative interviews (30-45 minutes each) will be conducted with 12-15 randomly selected individuals who participated in the *Communicating Across Cultures: Cultural Competence for Public Health and Health Care Professionals* PHPA training between September 1, 2017 and August 31, 2018.

Overarching Aim: The overarching aim of this evaluation is to explore how public health workers who participated in cultural competency PHPA trainings from September 1, 2017- August 30, 2018 applied the skills learned to their jobs.

Evaluation Questions: Specific evaluation questions include:

- Why did you register for this training course?
- What cultural competency (CC) skills were learned as a result of participation in the PHPA training?
- Please provide examples of how these skills have been used in their current job?
- What are the challenges of applying CC skills in your job?
- What did this training teach you about yourself and/or working with others?
- Have you taken the opportunity to extend your learning and growth in the area of CC to others in your workplace?
- What were the most valuable parts of the CC course?
- What were the least valuable parts of the CC course?

Additionally, the following information will be collected on each participant: sex, race, Hispanic origin, job title, length of time working in public health, and length of time working in current position.

## Next Steps

Immediate next steps include: schedule and conduct interviews; analyze data; and interpret findings.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> de Beaumont Foundation. (n.d.). Public health workforce interests and needs survey. Retrieved from <https://www.debeaumont.org/ph-wins/>.
- <sup>2</sup> Kirkpatrick, D.L. (1998). The four levels: An overview. In *Evaluating training programs; The four levels (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. (pp. 19-24). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. August 10, 2019