



Standards for Multicultural Assessment

Fourth Revision, 2012

The Association for Assessment in Counseling and Education (AACE) is an organization of counselors, educators, and other professionals that advances the counseling profession by providing leadership, training, and research in the creation, development, production, and use of assessment and diagnostic techniques. The mission and vision of AACE drives the continuing effort to create awareness of the importance of assessment and diagnostic techniques for an increasingly diverse population, to promote better training in the uses and development of assessments and to advocate for social justice concerns in counseling and educational assessment.

In 1992, the Committee on Diversity in Assessment under the direction of the Association for Assessment in Counseling (now AACE) Executive Council created the first set of standards addressing cultural diversity and the impact on assessment in counseling and education. In 2003, the Executive Council of the Association for Assessment in Counseling (AAC) appointed a committee to expand and update the original set of standards.

During the past decade, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) emphasized the centrality of diversity in our profession by including language regarding diversity and advocacy throughout every aspect of the 2009 CACREP Standards. The Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) has also acknowledged in its 2010 Standards the importance of cultural and individual diversity and has incorporated cultural competence into standards for rehabilitation counseling programs.

This revision of the Multicultural Assessment Standards addresses more specifically the role of social advocacy in assessment. Further, they speak to the importance of effectively selecting, administering, and interpreting assessments and diagnostic techniques while providing

training standards in multicultural assessment. The intent of the revision is to enhance counseling professionals' knowledge of as well as the public's awareness and support for culturally-appropriate assessment. This is particularly salient as assessment is an individual and system interventions useful for client/student and community empowerment, advocacy, collaboration, to change systems, and inform public opinion and policy.

Definition of Multicultural and Diverse Populations

We define multicultural populations broadly to recognize persons who differ by race, ethnicity, culture, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ability. Today counselors consider during the assessment process the impact of age, color, culture, ability, ethnic group, gender, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, linguistic background, socioeconomic status or other personal characteristics. Counselors are also challenged to advocate for culturally diverse individuals from marginalized populations. To this end, this revision of the Multicultural Assessment Standards offers an introductory section on Advocacy, however, we assert that advocacy be infused throughout the Standards.

The Standards

ADVOCACY

Culturally competent professional counselors recognize the importance of social justice advocacy; they integrate understanding of age, gender, ability, race, ethnic group, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, linguistic background, and other personal characteristics in order to provide appropriate assessment and diagnostic techniques.

Professional counselors should:

- Recognize in themselves and others, subtle biases and the way these biases influence and impact the assessment process for marginalized populations.
- Seek opportunities for learning by immersion into marginalized populations in order to gain understanding of clients' worldview and the impact on the assessment process.
- Support use of assessments with psychometric properties appropriate for individuals and vulnerable groups and create awareness about assessment of culturally diverse clients.
- Provide culturally competent and effective practices in all areas of counseling and assessment in individual, family, school, and community settings.
- Work collaboratively with community leaders to understand and address the needs of diverse clients providing opportunities to access services if needed.
- Address systemic barriers and consider how these barriers impact the interpretation and use of assessment results.

- Be knowledgeable of potential bias in assessment instruments and use procedures that comply with ethical guidelines when assessing marginalized populations.
- Are responsible for the appropriate applications, scoring, interpretations, and use of assessment instruments relevant to the needs of clients, whether they score and interpret such assessments themselves or use technology or other services.
- Take reasonable measures to ensure the proper use of psychological and assessment techniques by persons under their supervision, that results are kept confidential and that results are not misused by others.

SELECTION OF ASSESSMENTS: CONTENT AND PURPOSE, NORMING, RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Culturally competent professional counselors select assessments and diagnostic techniques that are appropriate and effective for diverse client populations.

Professional counselors should:

- Understand and follow the standard development procedures utilizing accepted research methods when developing new instruments to ensure technical quality of the content domains evaluated.
- Be knowledgeable of the technical aspects of assessments, including the importance of reliability, validity, measurement error and scores and norms when selecting assessments.
- Evaluate representative samples of test questions or practice tests, directions, answer sheets, manuals, and score reports before selecting a test.
- Understand how to review information on the performance of test takers of diverse subgroups, using appropriate norming information to ensure adequate subgroup analyses.
- Understand how to select and utilize appropriate modified forms of tests for test takers with disabilities who need special accommodations.
- Select assessments that help identify client needs, strengths and resources for client empowerment and self-advocacy.
- Select instruments with which they are trained and are competent to use and adhere to the ethical standards for the administration, scoring, interpretation, or reporting procedures and ensure that persons under their supervision are aware of these standards.
- Recognize the impact of cultural identity on test administration and interpretation, and place test results in proper perspective with other relevant factors.

ADMINISTRATION AND SCORING OF ASSESSMENTS

Culturally competent professional counselors recognize challenges inherent in assessment of persons and seek to provide administration and scoring of assessment to clients respecting age, gender, ability, race, ethnic group, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, linguistic background, and other personal characteristics.

Professional counselors should:

- Obtain, understand and follow all established protocol for administering standardized test instruments to clients with diverse linguistic backgrounds utilizing a competent and bilingual translator to address cultural identity throughout the assessment process including informed consent or other procedural directives.
- Become familiar with test question format and procedures for answering test questions as well as understand additional materials or needed equipment.
- Understand the nature and importance of test security, copyright, and ramifications of cheating and maintain confidentiality of scores using adequate security procedures.
- Be knowledgeable with procedures, materials and directions for scoring tests and/or monitoring scoring process to ensure accuracy of test scores, promptly reporting any errors and communicating corrected results promptly.
- Administer assessments only within the context of a defined professional relationship and utilize tests for their recommended purpose only
- Obtain informed consent from clients regarding the nature and purpose of assessment methods to be used and ensure that the test taker has the opportunity to become familiar with test question format.

INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Culturally competent professional counselors acknowledge the importance of social justice advocacy in interpretation and communication of assessment results with diverse populations.

Professional counselors should:

- Understand the normative groups, technical information, benefits and limitations of assessments and potential for bias in scoring and interpretation of assessment instruments.
- Provide a holistic appraisal of clients by creating a strong foundational evaluation respecting the influence of culture, background and individual characteristics.
- Understand the influence of culture, background, and individual characteristics when designing and implementing interventions to achieve effective counseling outcomes.
- Recognize how the effects of stigma, oppression, and discrimination impact the interpretation and application of assessment results for culturally diverse clients.
- Recognize and collaborate with others to eliminate biases, prejudices, and discriminatory contexts in conducting evaluations, interpretations and providing interventions.
- Explain the nature and purpose of assessment and specific use of results in an understandable, developmental level of the client or the client's legally authorized

representative providing information about the impact of culture on assessment results and interpretation.

- Consider other factors present in the client's situation (e.g., disability or cultural factors or systematic or internalized oppressing) before making any recommendations, when relevant.
- Do not use data or results from assessments that are obsolete or outdated and make every effort to prevent the misuse of obsolete measures and assessment data by others.
- Release assessment data in which clients are identified only with the consent of clients or their legal representatives, or court order and only released to professionals recognized as qualified to interpret the data.

TRAINING IN THE USES OF ASSESSMENTS

Culturally competent professional counselors seek training and supervised experience to ensure they provide appropriate assessment and diagnostic techniques for diverse client populations.

Professional counselors should:

- Understand the tests characteristics and receive guidance on the levels of skills, knowledge and training required to administer.
- Understand individual and group approaches to multicultural assessment.
- Receive training in how assessment data can be used to develop client action plans to make systemic changes that benefit disadvantaged individuals and vulnerable groups.
- Gain knowledge in how to collaborate with allies and policy makers to develop assessment practices that empower clients and educate the general public about culturally appropriate assessment of culturally diverse individuals and groups.
- Engage in continuous education to increase knowledge of assessment and enhance job performance.
- Have training and expertise in the use of traditional assessment and testing instruments including technical aspects of the instruments as well as cultural limitations to use test instruments for the welfare of culturally different clients.

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