

## Minutes

### Public Service and Trust Commission Committee on Cultural Competency Subcommittee on the Definition of Terms

The Committee on Cultural Competency, Subcommittee on the Definition of Terms met on October 22, 2009 at 225 Spring Street, Room 204, in Wethersfield.

Those in attendance were Ms. Dalia Panke (chair), Hon. Brian T. Fischer, Hon. David P. Gold, Ms. Diane Hatfield, Ms. Hilda Nieves and Hon. Richard A. Robinson.

The meeting was called to order at 2:15 PM.

1. Ms. Panke welcomed the subcommittee members in attendance and asked them to introduce themselves to the group.
2. Ms. Panke expressed that the Committee on Cultural Competency is a very important committee, and to define cultural competency for the entire Judicial Branch may be a large undertaking. She reviewed the Subcommittee charge to “conduct research and come to an understanding of what it means to be culturally competent.”
3. The Subcommittee members reviewed several handouts that elucidate cultural competence and how it is put into practice within several organizations, including other U.S. judicial systems, government, education, healthcare and private agencies. These documents were used as a springboard for discussion on how this Subcommittee will propose a definition and its application for the Judicial Branch.

Several Subcommittee members shared personal stories of cultural norms and how those norms could be misunderstood within the court system. The Subcommittee agreed that being aware of those cultural norms, and adapting our attitude and behavior, are important aspects of being culturally competent while interacting and communicating with members of the public. However, this does not mean there are different outcomes or preferential treatment for different groups of people.

The Subcommittee favored several citations concerning cultural competency:

*Cultural competence is define as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in a cross-cultural situations* (Source: Cross et al., 1989; Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991).

*The process of cultural competency means that a person learns to recognize and reject his or her preexisting beliefs about a culture; focuses on understanding*

*information provided by individuals within the context at hand; and foregoes the temptation to classify or label persons with cultural misinformation.* (Source: Maria D. Ramos, Esq., Utah Multi-Cultural Legal Center)

*Cultural competency includes an ability to work with people from all cultural identities in a way that promotes respect and dignity.* (Source: Utah Task Force on Ethnic and Racial Fairness in the Legal System, Utah Multi-Cultural Legal Center)

The Subcommittee will use the above citations to craft a statement that defines cultural competency for the Judicial Branch. The statement will specify what cultural competency is and what it is not for Judicial Branch staff and the bench depending on the level of interaction certain staff and judges have with members of the public.

4. Ms. Panke volunteered to write a draft that will be distributed to all Subcommittee members for input.

The meeting adjourned at 3:37 PM.