

Cultural Diversity

Hospice Volunteer Training 2026

“Strength lies in differences
not in similarities.”

Stephen Covey

Why Cultural Sensitivity Matters

1. Preserving Dignity and Identity

- Honoring a patient's spiritual, religious, cultural background at end of life provides a patient a sense of control of self.
- Small deeds of assisting in obtaining familiar objects, rituals, and/or prayers helps a person feel seen.

2. Building Trust-Reducing Fear

- Find ways to show awareness of a patient culture helps patients and families to build trust.
- Building Trust reduces fear, reduces inequity at end of life and increases patient satisfaction

3. Enhancing Quality of Care

- Different Cultures having different expectations about hospice, pain, treatments, comfort, and decision making.
- Learning what those expectations are allows us to exceed those expectations
- Knowing these expectations also allows us to maintain ethical boundaries.

4. Supporting Families and Grief Processes

- Grief and mourning are deeply rooted in culture
- Traditions: anointing of the sick, visiting the patient prior to death, bedside vigils, burial, cremation, memorials, visitations, funerals, etc.
- Allowing patients to identify their needs and assisting families in mourning in their cultural preference respects expression of grief

You can also split your content

White

Is the color of milk and fresh snow, the color produced by the combination of all the colors of the visible spectrum.

Black

Is the color of coal, ebony, and of outer space. It is the darkest color, the result of the absence of or complete absorption of light.

Common Cultural Considerations in Hospice Care

Remember Every Family is Unique

- **Communication Preferences:** Some cultures are direct, others more gentle.
- **Decision Making Dynamics:** Who makes the decisions? Are the decisions based on one, multiple family members or community?
- **Rituals and Spiritual Needs:** Prayer, last rites, washing of the body, dietary restrictions
- **Language:** Are there language barriers that can lead to misunderstanding of medical information
- **Pain and Suffering:** Is there cultural meaning behind suffering? Focus on understanding preferred intervention for pain helps shared decision making.

Challenges and How to Overcome Them

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Lack of Training and Awareness

Regular training, exposure, and practice in diversity helps equip staff and volunteers in competence and humility.

Systemic and Institutional Barriers

Having policies that allow flexibility in rules and adaptability in environment to allow cultural practices around food, prayer, visiting to name a few.

Communication

Use of interpreters, liaisons, and any other aids in providing clear language for all.

Conflicting Beliefs

Honesty, respect, and being open with patient and family beliefs and wishes. Use ethics committee when needed.

Practical Steps for Culturally Sensitive Hospice Care

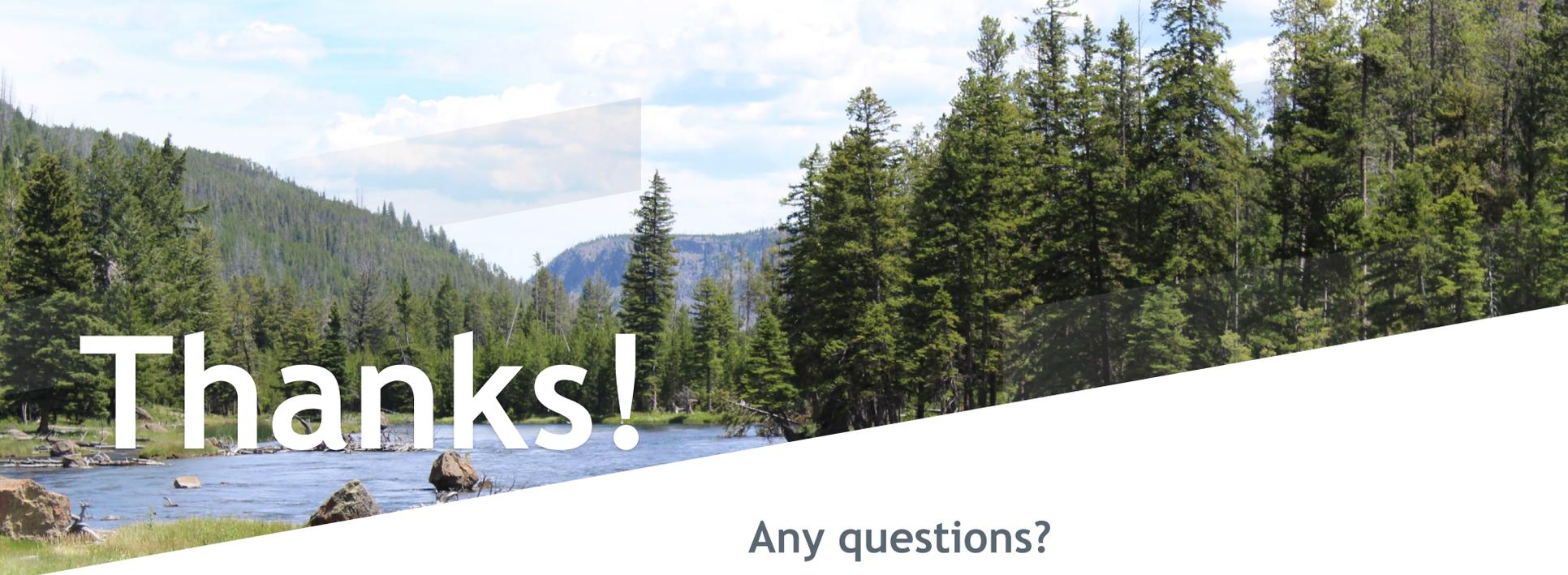
Taking Practical Steps

- Start at initial visit. Ask questions. “How is information shared in the family?” “Are there important beliefs- religious or spiritual that you want?”
- Provide access to religious leaders, allow time for their religious rituals or prayers
- Be flexible when you visit. Changing times to allow family gathering, time for prayer.
- Allow adjustments to be made to the environment. Privacy-stepping outside, opening windows
- Complete hospice training and other training focus on cultural diversity
- Use visual aids or other ways to increase communication

Cultural Sensitivity's Impact

IMPACT OF BEING CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

- Patient and families feel respected and supported
- Avoid conflicts and misunderstands
- Patient and families have increased satisfaction, decreased anxiety and decrease pain



Thanks!

Any questions?

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