A Culturally-Responsive Framework for Justice Involved Individuals

Culturally responsive supervision begins with recognizing that every individual brings unique cultural experiences, beliefs, values, and strengths that influence how they interact with the justice system. Inclusive practices, collaboration, and strong community partnerships are fundamental to equitable service delivery.

Recognizing that resources and capacity differ across community supervision agencies, these recommendations are designed to be practical, flexible, and able to be implemented per each agency's plan. Their purpose is to support meaningful progress toward culturally responsive practices.

1. **Foundational Principle – A Commitment to Cultural Responsiveness**

   Agencies should foster an organizational culture that values diversity, promotes equity and belonging, and continually evaluates their practices to ensure equitable service delivery.

   - Recognize that culture influences communication styles, decision-making, family dynamics, and engagement in supervision.
   - Promote respect for cultural differences while recognizing the strengths that diverse backgrounds bring to the supervision process.
   - Foster an organizational culture of continuous learning and self-reflection.
   - Integrate culturally responsive and trauma-informed principles throughout agency practices.
   - Encourage equitable and respectful interactions that build trust and improve engagement.

2. **Assessment and Screening**

   Agencies should ensure clients are evaluated fairly, accurately, and within the context of their unique backgrounds, experiences, values, and circumstances. When professionals recognize this, they are better equipped to distinguish between true risk and need factors and culturally influenced differences. This helps to:

   - Reduce bias
   - Improve the accuracy of risk and need identification
   - Ensure that case planning reflects individual strengths, barriers, and live experiences.

3. **Supervision Strategies**

   Clients are more likely to achieve long-term behavior change through positive and supportive relationships.

   - Create collaborative case plans that prioritize immediate safety and stabilization and goal setting which includes a client's individual cultural needs.

- Move towards coaching, client centered advocacy, and problem-solving partnership.
- Prioritize positive reinforcement and behavior-modification incentives over immediate punitive sanctions.
- Provide clarity and transparency in communication. Outline the continuum of responses to both positive progress and non-compliance up front. Sharing what steps occur will help reduce trauma-inducing anxiety and unpredictability in sanctions.
- Joint meetings: Collaborate with other services providers/partners and coordinate contacts to work as a team when appropriate.
- Provide options/choices where applicable/appropriate considering a client's cultural or independent needs.
- Utilize statewide cultural resources to improve coordination and release planning.
    - Connect clients with culturally specific services before discharge or transition from a correctional or other facility and coordinate with community organizations.
    - Include cultural supports as part of reentry or release planning discussions.
    - Share successful referral strategies across agencies.

4. Strength Based and Community Support Systems and Programming

Community connection is a key component of culturally responsive supervision because it recognizes that individuals do not exist in isolation. They are influenced by their families, cultures, neighborhoods, faith communities, and support networks.

Building meaningful relationships with culturally relevant community resources helps to better understand each client's strengths, values, and barriers, and long-term success. When we foster these connections, supervision becomes more responsive to individual needs, strengthens protective factors, and supports positive outcomes for clients, families and communities.

- Gather feedback from community organizations to ensure that staff and clients are aware of what is available to them.
- Build relationships with Tribal members and other cultural organizations to understand what services are offered by local and urban offices:
    - Meet quarterly/annually with Tribal members and cultural organizations to discuss available services and strengthen partnerships.
    - Invite Tribal members and cultural organizations to provide educational presentations to agency staff.
    - Include Tribal members and cultural organizations in community resource fairs and collaborative meetings.
    - Encourage staff to learn about the history, sovereignty, and cultural practices of Tribes in their service area as well as other cultural histories and practices.
- Create a directory of interpreters, culturally specific organizations, faith communities, behavioral health providers, food shelves, housing services, transportations services,

etc. that include virtual support groups and telehealth resources that are easily accessible for staff and clients to be updated quarterly or yearly.

- Designate a cultural resource coordinator or point of contact within the agency.

5. Staff Development

For an agency to become truly culturally responsive, deliberate and continuous investment in specialized staff training and support is needed.

- Carefully screen and recruit staff members who demonstrate high levels of empathy, strong communication skills, an ability to incorporate accountability with compassion, and are skilled in working with complex behavioral dynamics.
- Provide new staff with information about local cultures, Tribal communities, and community partners during onboarding.
- Invest in ongoing training for supervision staff, leaders, and support personnel to build staff knowledge and confidence in the following areas:
    - Cultural responsiveness
    - Trauma-informed Care
    - Implicit Bias
    - Tribal-State Relations
    - Specific cultural awareness of community organizations/members
- Require annual refresher training on the above.
- Host gatherings with local cultural organizations, Tribal representatives, and other community leaders to better understand local community resources.
- Encourage staff to develop individual cultural learning goals as part of annual training requirements.
- Partner with neighboring agencies to co-host training and/or share training opportunities.
- Create a shared online source for cultural resources and recorded training.
- Develop cross-agency relationships to exchange ideas and successful practices.
- Incorporate resource navigation into supervisor check-ins or staff meetings.

6. Staff Wellbeing and Vicarious Trauma

Relational, trauma-informed supervision asks staff to absorb more of a client's distress than a purely compliance-monitoring approach requires. Without deliberate support, this exposure erodes the model itself. Staff may drift toward detached, authority-heavy supervision not by choice but as a self-protective response to unaddressed cumulative stress.

- Acknowledge and normalize vicarious trauma/secondary traumatic stress as an expected occupational exposure, not a personal shortcoming, and train staff to

recognize its signs in themselves (cynicism, emotional numbing, dread before contacts).

- Establish regular case consultation/debrief conversations, where staff can process difficult cases.
- Actively encourage use of Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) or clinical consultation resources.
- Train supervisors to recognize vicarious trauma in their staff and to offer support.
- Celebrate staff successes and recognize resilience and positive outcomes.
- Consider implementation of Peer Support Teams to supplement traditional employee assistance and clinical support.

7. **Environment & Operations**
   - Physical space (waiting rooms, offices) designed with safety and privacy in mind as well as inclusive languages, artwork, and representation.
   - Recognize that environment can impact success. A technical violation may be the result of the environment rather than a willful defiance.
   - Ensure access to interpretive and translation services with written materials available in languages of clients most commonly served.
8. **Evaluation and Quality Improvement**
   - Regularly engage in case consults and audit case plans to ensure staff are correctly applying and maintaining a trauma-informed, relational lens.
   - Collect agency data by demographics. (exp. revocation rates, technical violations, new offenses, and program completion rates).
   - Obtain client feedback via anonymous surveys.
   - Continue to review applicable research and update policies to reflect best practices.
9. **Policy and Organizational Practices**
   - Review agency policies, standard operating procedures, and mission statements to ensure they support diversity, equity, and belonging.
   - Review hiring practices to reduce barriers and encourage diverse applicant pools.
   - Include diverse interview panel members whenever possible.
   - Incorporate cultural responsiveness expectations into job descriptions and interview questions.
   - Establish an equity and belonging committee that includes staff from different roles and backgrounds.
   - Leadership regularly communicate organizational expectations around equity and belonging and respectful workplace practices.