Cultural Competency During Emergency Events

- **Be aware:**
  - People in uniform may not be immediately trusted. Recognize that different communities have different relationships with the government and may not trust services or warnings from that source.
  - Culture and language can affect one’s ability to understand emergency notifications and updates.
  - Some cultures may prefer that rapport or a relationship is built before personal information is disclosed (i.e. medical or financial).
  - There are cultural variations in expression of emotions and manifestations and descriptions of symptoms.
  - Just because someone looks like you does not mean they share the same cultural beliefs or values.
  - Culturally and linguistically appropriate care also applies to emergency personnel.

- **Recognize that the most common reaction to disaster is disbelief.**
  - Be aware some cultures are more likely to rely on and trust social networks (i.e. friends, family, religious institutions) or ethnic media for disaster information as opposed to more formal warnings.
  - Individuals will often try to confirm the threat by seeking secondary information from someone in their community.

- **Understand that there may be cultural and/or socioeconomic reasons for unwillingness to evacuating, such as:**
  - Feeling safe because they have survived previous events or because of religious faith.
  - Misunderstanding regarding the severity of the storm.
  - Financial constraints.
  - Fear of neighborhood crime if the premises is vacated.
  - Perceived racism and inequities.

- **Ensure that:**
  - Individuals are able not only to access but also understand the forms of communication they are given.
  - Services are appropriate and modified to fit the cultural context of the community member(s) you are serving.
  - Information is provided in multiple languages via radio, television, and community or religious center announcements.

- **When communicating with someone with limited English-language proficiency:**
  - Exercise patience. Persevere with the person until comprehension is made or seek assistance from someone from the linguistic group.
  - Speak more slowly than usual and articulate each word.
Avoid using interjections, technical words, and linking words together (i.e. \textit{evacuatethearea}).

Do not mix affirmative statements with negative statements.
- Example: \textit{Do bring warm blankets. Do not bring the dog. Do bring a flashlight.}

Communication can be facilitated by:
- Translating the most important phrases.
- Organizing for interpreters.
- Changing worded signs to symbols.
- Using universal symbols when possible.

Using children as interpreters is highly discouraged.

Translated materials should not substitute for oral interpretation.

References:
