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## Culture and Parenting: A Guide for Delivering Parenting Curriculums to Diverse Families

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## Culture and Parenting: A Guide for Delivering Parenting Curriculums to Diverse Families

### Abstract

As the population becomes increasingly diverse, family support programs must be prepared to address diversity in parenting practices. The University of California Families with Young Children Workgroup conducted a review of parenting curriculums and interviewed collaborators to determine how to best address this need. As a result, Culture and Parenting: A Guide for Delivering Parenting Curriculums to Diverse Families was developed to supplement commonly used parenting curriculums. The guide encourages educators and practitioners to evaluate their work with families by delivering research-based information on how culture influences parenting goals and tips for educators to consider when working with diverse audiences.

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## Introduction

Extension has a long history of providing resources for practitioners and educators who work with parents and families. These resources are often in the form of curriculums based on parenting research conducted largely with white, middle-class families. As a result, many current materials focus on a narrow range of acceptable behaviors and practices in parenting, with little information about how these practices may vary appropriately for diverse audiences. As the cultural make-up of parents in Extension classes changes, there is a need for practitioners and parent educators to have access to information on how culture may shape parenting values, goals, and behaviors.

To begin to understand how diversity issues are addressed or neglected in current parenting curriculums and practices, the Families with Young Children Workgroup at the University of California <<http://groups.ucanr.org/kids/>> conducted a two-part needs assessment that 1) used interviews with local collaborators and agencies that work directly with parents and 2) systematically reviewed commonly used parenting curriculums. The interview questions asked practitioners to reflect on parenting topics they saw as varying among different cultural and ethnic groups with which they work.

Practitioners expressed an awareness of cultural variations in parenting practices across a range of parenting domains (e.g., discipline, communication, feeding) and saw that these variations resulted in a range of acceptable and appropriate parenting behaviors. In other words, practitioners who were interviewed did not express that there was one optimal set of behaviors for parents to raise healthy children. Instead, some practitioners said that they commonly alter or amend curriculums they are using to reflect these variations. For instance, one practitioner who commonly works with Hispanic and Latino parents said with regards to gender roles " . . . Hispanic families don't think it is appropriate for boys to do chores that involve things like cooking and cleaning, so we don't even include those things if it is in a curriculum we are using."

In contrast, the review of commonly used parenting curriculums delivered a different message. Instead of talking about a range of parenting behaviors that may be practiced by different cultural

groups, curriculums tended to advocate for one type of practice or behavior. Furthermore, it was usually the case that the perspective taken was for practices common to white, middle-class families. This can make it difficult for practitioners to choose an appropriate curriculum when working with non-white, middle-class groups of parents or diverse groups of parents.

This is compounded by the fact that different cultural groups may also be looking for different types of information when attending parenting classes. For instance, some practitioners reported that Hispanic parents tend to use the groups for on-going support and resources rather than for certificates or units. Thus, curriculums are commonly tailored by the staff to meet the perceived needs of the clientele. These practitioners expressed the need for resources that address diversity across common parenting domains (e.g., discipline, communication) rather than another curriculum because the diversity of groups can vary greatly and the variation among common practices can vary even among one cultural group. Because these curricular variations are not addressed in commonly used curriculums, practitioners felt a guide would be useful to help them support and inform parents around pertinent parenting issues.

## Culture and Parenting Guide

In response to this need, the Families with Young Children Workgroup at the University of California developed a guide for practitioners and educators. The goal was to draw upon the extensive body of research on culture and human development to provide background information that would allow practitioners and educators to understand how diverse family contexts may shape parenting values and goals.

For example, practitioners and educators may be surprised when a Latino mother consults with not only her husband but also her parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins when making major decisions about her children. While it is common for parent educators to talk about "family decision making," it is usually in reference to the mother, father, and children, but not to extended family members.

Implementing a shared language and acknowledging the diversity of appropriate parenting practices builds a sense of trust and acceptance between the educator and client. Giving educators access to background knowledge rather than a prescribed curriculum allows them to use the knowledge effectively across a variety of contexts, while acknowledging the enormous diversity of cultures represented across the population.

*Culture and Parenting: A Guide for Delivering Parenting Curriculums to Diverse Families* allows educators to draw upon research-based information to evaluate the cultural sensitivity of programs and services they offer families. The guide is structured around areas typically addressed in parenting curriculums: communication, discipline, emotional bonding, family structure and roles, gender role development, play, and sleeping arrangements.

Each section contains a brief review of the main research findings related to parenting goals. These findings are also translated to provide exemplars regarding the range of parenting behaviors that may result from different cultural belief systems.

Because the goal of the guide is to encourage educators to review the curriculums and methods they use, checklists for each section are provided. The checklists encourage educators to think about how culture may shape parenting behaviors in each area, and to develop an understanding of alternative behaviors that they may observe in families they serve.

## Conclusion

As the population of families continues to become increasingly diverse, services that support them must be equipped to address this diversity appropriately. While there is a wealth of parenting curriculums available, there is a lack of resources available that guide educators on how to address diversity in parenting behaviors of their clientele. The culture and parenting guide provides practitioners and educators with a supplement to existing parenting curriculums. It is designed to encourage reflection on the implementation of curriculums they are using and to promote critical thinking about how culture may shape parents' values, goals and behaviors with their children.

To download or order *Culture and Parenting: A Guide for Delivering Parenting Curriculums to Diverse Families*, visit <<http://groups.ucanr.org/kids/>>.

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