Options for UCare Staff Increase Cultural Competence to Improve Service Delivery

In their efforts to provide culturally competent care to the diverse populations it serves, independent, nonprofit health plan UCare takes a multifaceted and ongoing training and education approach to give opportunities for staff at all levels and within all functional areas of their organization.

UCare provides health coverage and services to diverse Minnesotans, including Medicare-eligible individuals, and families enrolled in Minnesota Health Care Programs such as MinnesotaCare and Medical Assistance, and adults with disabilities.

That education begins with a day-long diversity training course for all new hires, UCare Community Outreach Manager Monica Gossett said. The course addresses both the diverse communities that make up UCare’s members and the diverse employees that serve them. Reflecting their member makeup, currently, 32 percent of UCare’s workforce is diverse. “It’s a good way to get things started, let new employees know that diversity is important to us, that we recognize and respect it,” said Gossett.

Recognizing that commitment of leadership is essential to an organization’s ability to integrate cultural competence, Ghita Worcester, senior VP, public affairs and chief marketing officer leads UCare’s cultural competence committee along with Gossett. The committee has at least one person from each UCare department to help advance cultural competence throughout the organization.

Knowing the benefit of first-hand experiences with diverse cultures, UCare requires every employee to participate in one diversity event per year. These can include community events or company-sponsored activities. UCare’s Cultural Competence Committee plans activities in a variety of formats so that staff can choose the learning method they most prefer. Offerings include outside speakers representing diverse groups and topics ranging from culture to autism to mental health, lunch and learn sessions hosted by internal departments, recorded online videos, and diversity book clubs. For one book club, UCare invited the author of *The Song Poet*, Kao Kalia Yang, to discuss her work and experiences as a Hmong American.

Participation in diversity events is strong with around 100 employees at

Continued on Page 2 >>
every diversity event, and 50 to 60 at
diversity book clubs, out of almost 900
total employees.
UCare continues to look for new
ways to foster conversations about
views on culture and diversity. One
recent exercise involved the Culture
Care Connection Implicit Bias in
Health Care quiz. Answers to the
10 questions in this quiz reveal how
implicit bias – positive or negative
attitudes or stereotypes – affect our
understanding, actions, and decisions in
an unconscious way.
Taken initially by the cultural
competence committee made up
representatives from every UCare
department, then later by their
government relations department, the
implicit bias quiz generated thoughtful
discussions on the broad spectrum
of biases, and how they might impact
interactions with coworkers and UCare
members alike. Gossett said other
UCare departments expressed interest
in taking the quiz as a group
diversity exercise.
UCare's cultural competence training
also includes a commitment to the
National Standards for Culturally
and Linguistically Appropriate
Services (CLAS) in Health and
Health Care. The principal CLAS
standard to “Provide effective,
equitable, understandable, and
respectful quality care and services
that are responsive to diverse cultural
health beliefs and practices, preferred
languages, health literacy, and other
communication needs,” guides a yearly
departmental review of how UCare as
an organization is incorporating CLAS
standards into their work.
Beyond providing awareness
and education, UCare is putting
cultural competence into practice
to improve service delivery. In one
example, individual customer service
representatives were finding it
challenging to meet the standards
for call efficiency, often due to what
they perceived as unusually long calls
helping Somali members. Because
UCare’s diversity reflects their member
makeup, several Somali customer
service reps noticed their colleagues’
difficulties and consulted leadership to
discuss the issue.
At a team meeting, the Somali reps
explained that because of their culture,
several people might be in the same
house, and a younger English-speaking
Somali may call in for multiple,
older non-English-speaking Somali
members, asking questions for each,
one after the next.
A training session and adjustments
to the way those calls are measured
addressed the problem. Those steps
were made possible in part by UCare’s
embedded framework to recognize
and adapt to the diverse populations
they serve.
Awareness of diversity is an essential
piece of the puzzle regarding providing
culturally competent care. However,
awareness is not always equal to
preparedness, and UCare proves that
designing and implementing training
to better prepare for diversity offers
real benefits to their organization and
their members.
Visit the Culture Care Connection
website for information and resources
for improving service delivery
and culturally-competent care in your
organization.

**CLINICAL CORNER**

**NHLBI-Supported Drug Candidate to Prevent Sickle Cell Pain in Advanced Testing Stage**

Pain is one of the unfortunate
symptoms of sickle cell disease (SCD),
often growing in intensity as
patients age. SCD disproportionately
impacts specific racial and ethnic populations including
African Americans, Latinos and people of Middle Eastern,
Indian, Asian and Mediterranean descent.
Pain is a leading cause of emergency room visits and
hospitalizations among people with the disease, and the
frequency of those pain-related hospital admissions is a
strong predictor of premature death. Researchers have
tried for years to find effective pain-relieving alternatives
to improve the management of the condition, but have
seen limited success.
That could soon change, thanks to technology developed
and tested with support from the National Heart, Lung,
and Blood Institute (NHLBI).
A new synthetic antibody prevents red blood cells and
other blood cell types from sticking to the walls of blood
vessels and causing a cell pileup that restricts blood flow.
That blockage is what leads to painful sickle cell crises and
organ damage.
In a series of clinical trials, researchers demonstrated that
the synthetic antibody appears safe and significantly reduces
the incidence of painful crises in patients with SCD.
The antibody could be administered once a month by
injection to prevent painful sickle cell crises. More >>
September is National Sickle Cell Awareness Month

September is National Sickle Cell Awareness Month. The sickle cell disease (SCD) group of inherited red blood disorders affects millions globally. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that SCD affects approximately 100,000 individuals in the U.S. National Sickle Cell Awareness Month 2018, will focus on helping to raise awareness about the importance of sickle cell disease research and treatment. More >>

Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Tobacco Product Use Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2014–2017

Wide disparities in tobacco product use have been documented among the largest U.S. racial/ethnic groups. However, apart from the three most populous groups (non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, and Hispanics), little is known about tobacco use among youths from other racial/ethnic groups. This CDC report explores new data on tobacco use by Native Hawaiians/Other Pacific Islanders, American Indians/Alaska Natives, and Asians. More >>

Breastfeeding Toolkit for Working Mothers

This online resource is a tool for breastfeeding mothers who are returning to work or school. The toolkit not only provides assistance and information to breastfeeding mothers, but also provides assistance to the new mom’s employer, family, and friends. Produced by the WIC Works Resource System, a project of the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. More >>

Guiding Principles for the Care of People With Or At Risk for Diabetes

These Guiding Principles from the National Diabetes Education Program aim to identify and synthesize areas of general agreement among existing guidelines to help guide primary care providers and health care teams to deliver quality care to adults with or at risk for diabetes. Principle 10 is: Consider the needs of high-risk racial and ethnic groups with diabetes. More >>

Community Health Worker Resources

This collection of resources from the CDC is designed to help community health workers facilitate access to services and to improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. More >>
EVENTS

Webinar: Promising Practices to Improve Hispanic Health - Approaches to Hispanic Health Research
Tuesday, September 25, 2018 12:30–2:00 p.m.
National leaders will discuss current trends in research practices to advance Hispanic/Latino health in the U.S. and globally. More >>

Webinar: Health Disparities - Using Data to Identify and Act
Wednesday, October 10, 2018 12:00–12:45 p.m.
Minnesota ranks high for quality of care and health status, but has stark disparities within the overall population. By analyzing patient data, clinics can reveal disparities and health equity issues. West Side Community Health Services will share how they use REL data to identify and address gaps through quality improvement initiatives. More >>

Workshop: Cultural Competence in Health & Human Services
Sunday, October 14, 2018 Amherst H. Wilder Foundation
This one day workshop includes film vignettes, planning activities, role-plays, and other interactive activities. It is based on national standards for cultural and linguistic competence, as well as federal laws and national best practices. More >>

Many Faces of Community Health Conference
October 25-26, 2018
Hyatt Regency Bloomington
Registration Early Bird Deadline is October 4
The Many Faces of Community Health conference explores improving care and reducing health disparities in underserved populations and among those living in poverty. The conference examines community care innovations, health care delivery models, and other health care reform initiatives that promote health equity, prevent and manage chronic diseases, and ensure access for all. Visit Stratis Health’s exhibit at the conference to hear about our latest cultural competence tools and resources. More >>

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Stratis Health is a nonprofit organization that leads collaboration and innovation in health care quality and safety, and serves as a trusted expert in facilitating improvement for people and communities. Stratis Health works toward its mission through initiatives funded by federal and state government contracts, and community and foundation grants, including serving as Minnesota’s Medicare Quality Improvement Organization.

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