



User Guide

Who Is This Guide For?

The CAC User Guide is designed for:

- Older adults or people with disabilities receiving direct care services in their homes or communities.
- Family members and friends of individuals who employ direct care workers.
- Organizations that employ direct care workers on behalf of people receiving support.
- Professionals who support individuals receiving long-term care services. This may include:
 - o IRIS Consultants
 - o Family Care Care Managers
 - o Staff at Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC)

Overview

Purpose

The resources on the CAC platform are for older adults and people with disabilities. The information and activities can help people receiving support and their workers develop stronger relationships. This is done by understanding their differences and improving their communication skills.

This User Guide will help learners get the most out of the materials on the CAC learning platform. The Guide will help learners focus on the actions that are required to develop skills and insights. These skills and insights will positively impact their working relationships.





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Differences in Culture

At CAC, we focus on the concept of *culture*, which means the many ways—both seen and unseen—that people are different. These differences are an important part of our identities. They include things like:

- language
- race
- ethnicity
- gender
- sexual orientation
- age
- education
- beliefs
- social class

But diversity is not limited to these categories. It also includes unique experiences that shape who we are as individuals.

Why Differences Matter

Every interaction between two people involves differences, and they can affect how we communicate and what we expect from each other. Sometimes, differences can lead to challenges, such as disagreements or misunderstandings. How a person chooses to respond can either strengthen or weaken a relationship.

Building Trust in Direct Care

Direct care work can be intimate. It can create a sense of vulnerability for both the person receiving care and the care worker. Trust is essential in these relationships. Learning to recognize and talk about differences is important. It can build stronger, more trusting connections. These trusting connections improve the experience for both individuals.



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How to Use This Guide

Strategy

Before you start each course, read the information in this guide to understand what to expect. Come back to the information after completing a course. There will be additional things you can do to further your learning.

The Guide is Optional

Learners can benefit from the CAC learning platform without using this Guide.

Learners are free to explore CAC's resources. Do this at your own pace and discover the information that is most helpful to your own learning needs. CAC's online courses and library items are free, with unlimited access 24 hours a day/7 days a week.

Before You Begin

Learners can complete the free courses in any order and access them as often as they'd like. The CAC also includes a resource library. The library has short documents and activities that relate to the course content.

The CAC platform is designed to be self-paced. Learners with internet access can complete the learning modules and activities on their own. However, the content and activities may have more impact if learners use and talk about them with someone else.

Decisions about Language Used in the CAC Materials

The people who developed Caring Across Cultures made decisions about the language used. In particular, how to talk about people who receive care and direct care workers. Before you





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begin the courses, please review these short documents. You will learn about those decisions on language.

Who Is an Employer?

This document explains the different ways the word “employer” is used. It also explains why the CAC materials use the word “employer” to refer to an individual receiving direct care.

Talking and Thinking About Disability

The CAC materials use two types of language to talk about disability:

- person-first
- identity-first

This short document explains the difference between the two. It also explains why we chose to use both approaches.

Explore more

[This article](#) is from the Council on Disability Awareness. It gives more information on person-first and identity-first language. It also offers perspectives from a number of people who have a disability.





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Courses

1. [An Overview of Direct Care Work](#)

Summary: This course is primarily for people who are new to direct care work. It helps them understand what makes this work unique. It may also be helpful for employers who don't have much experience hiring and supervising direct care workers. It may help them learn how to explain the job to a new worker.

Learning Goal: Learn how direct care work is different from other jobs.

What You'll Do:

- **Understand the Role:** Learn about the roles and responsibilities of direct care workers.
- **Self-Assessment:** Complete an activity to evaluate your own skills and interests in relation to direct care work.
- **Reflect:** Think about whether this career path is right for you.

How to learn the most from the material:

- Be honest as you answer the reflection questions. This will help you make a more informed decision about whether direct care work is a good fit for you.
- Talk about your thoughts with others who have experience in direct care. Ask them about their experiences as direct care workers.

If you want to learn more:

- The [Direct Care Worker Story Project](#) is a great place to learn more about direct care work. You can read stories from a diverse group of direct care workers. The workers talk about the unique rewards and challenges of doing direct care work.





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2. [Your Beliefs About Disability](#)

Summary: People have different ideas and opinions about what it means to have a disability. This course helps learners explore their beliefs about disability and why these beliefs matter in their interactions with other people.

Learning Goal: Identify the connection between your beliefs about and your expectations of others.

What You'll Do:

- **Reflect on Beliefs:** Think about your own beliefs about disability. Consider where your beliefs about disability come from.
- **Watch and Discuss:** Engage with the videos and case studies. They will help challenge common misunderstandings about disability.
- **Learn Expectations:** Understand the expectations that disabled individuals have of their direct care workers.

How to learn the most from the material:

- Remember that “disability” is a word that can mean many different things. Every person who experiences disability is different. There is not one way to understand what disability means.
- If you are a care worker, think about your beliefs about disability and caregiving. These beliefs might affect your relationship with those you care for.
- If you are an employer, think about how you can help your workers understand what disability means for you.





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If you want to learn more:

- [People First Wisconsin](#) is a statewide self-advocacy organization. It is run by and for people with disabilities. Their website has articles and videos that can help direct care workers. It can help you better understand what it means to experience disability. For employers, the People First website can help you connect to a larger community. People First is working to make every community in the state a place where everyone is welcome and valued.

3. [Understanding Our Differences](#)

Summary: This course helps learners recognize how people are different. You may discover things you have never thought of before. Understanding how and why people are different is an important step toward building respectful relationships.

Learning Goal: Understand and notice cultural differences between yourself and others.

What You'll Do:

- **Explore the Meaning of Culture:** Culture refers to all the ways that each of us is unique. What is your cultural identity?
- **Reflect on Differences:** Read stories that show different ways of thinking and behaving. Consider how these differences might impact your work and relationships.
- **Learn Strategies:** Develop strategies to foster understanding and acceptance of others.

How to learn the most from the material:

- Think about who you are and what parts of your identity are most important to you. Everyone has a cultural identity; what is yours?





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- Think about times in your life when you encountered someone who was different from you. What did that feel like and how did you react?
- Practice empathy by putting yourself in someone else's shoes. Be curious about what it may feel like to be someone else.

If you want to learn more:

- [Cultural Diversity: The sum of our parts](#). In this TEDx talk video, Hilda Mwangi explains how each of us has a unique cultural identity. She talks about how we can use our curiosity to better understand ourselves and others.

4. [Resolving Differences to Build Strong Relationships](#)

Summary: This course covers important skills. These skills make meaningful connections in a relationship possible. These skills include self-awareness, curiosity, listening, and empathy. The skills can be developed or improved over time with practice.

Learning Goal: Learn and use communication strategies to manage cultural differences.

What You'll Do:

- **Learn how differences can lead to conflict:** Differences in our cultural backgrounds can lead to confusion and conflict. You'll learn about ways that can happen.
- **Self-Awareness Exercise:** Learn about ways that differences may make you uncomfortable.
- **Practice Skills:** Learn and practice through activities and reflections. You'll learn about skills like active listening, empathy, and curiosity.





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- **Reflect and Apply:** Consider how these skills can help you resolve conflicts. And how they strengthen your relationships.

How to learn the most from the material:

- Each of us has experienced uncomfortable emotional reactions to differences. Sometimes those responses lead to tension or conflict. When tension or conflict happens, pay attention to your own emotional responses. Awareness is the first step to managing your responses effectively.
- Pausing or taking a break can be a very effective way to manage a conflict. It can help you sort through other uncomfortable feelings. Slowing down can help you understand why you are feeling uncomfortable. This may make it easier to respond in ways that help you feel better.
- Use the skills you practice in this section. They are helpful both in your work and also in your personal relationships.
- **Always Be Curious.**

If you want to learn more

- **Activities for Building Connections** This short document describes some activities that self-advocates and family members have used to “break the ice” and build connections with direct care workers.



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Thank you for your interest in Caring Across Cultures!

Make sure to explore our Library. We have role-specific information for employers and direct care workers.

We hope the use of our materials makes a difference in your working relationships!

If you've found CAC to be a helpful resource, please direct others to our website.

