



The DSM-5 Cultural Formulation Interview (CFI): Overview and Recent Development



The DSM-5 CFI, is considered a systematic cultural assessment method. It contains a list of particular topics that would be included in a cultural assessment to improve diagnostic accuracy and client engagement in treatment planning.¹

Providers can use the instrument during the intake session or in the middle of treatment. Administering the CFI could take from 20 to 50 minutes, depending on the clinician's experience with the CFI.¹ This instrument is useful and essential to explore Hispanic and Latino populations' mental health issues and cultural implications.

“Everybody has culture”

Culture shapes the way people give meaning to our experiences of illness, health and healing. As a system of socially transmitted values, norms, practices and beliefs, culture may influence how we:

- Express, explain and communicate our distress
- Seek help and participate in care
- Experience, perceive and prioritize our symptoms
- Understand treatment



Attention to culture may help clinicians to:

- Determine whether an experience is an “illness”
- Communicate during a clinical encounter/service
- Support individuals
- Develop a respectful stance toward care

Goals of the CFI²:

- Account for the influence of culture
- Enhance clinician-patient communication in all clinical encounters
- Improve outcomes

CFI Domains²:

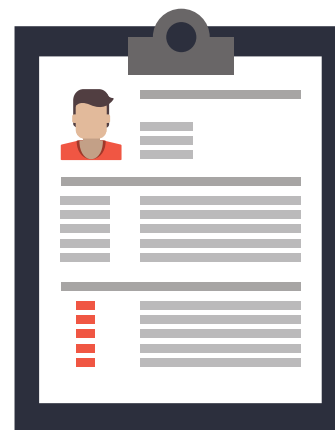
- Cultural Definition of the Problem
- Cultural Perceptions of Cause, Context, and Support
- Cultural Factors Affecting Self-Coping and Past Help Seeking
- Cultural Factors Affecting Current Help Seeking

CFI is specially useful in cases of:

- Cultural differences that complicate diagnostic assessment
- Uncertainty of fit between symptoms and ICD or DSM diagnosis
- Difficulty in judging severity or impairment
- Difficulties with engagement

Resources for Providers³:

- Online training is available for providers at: <https://nyculturalcompetence.org/cfionlinemodule/>
- Access the DSM-5 CFI at: <https://nyculturalcompetence.org/research-initiatives/initiative-diagnosis-engagement/cultural-formulation-interview-project/>
- Short videos illustrating use of sections of the CFI, including the core CFI and some supplementary modules: <https://www.appi.org/Lewis-Fernandez>



References

- Lewis-Fernández, R., Aggarwal, N.K., Lam, P., Galfalvy, H., Weiss, M.G., Kirmayer, L.J., Paralikar, V., ... & Vega-Dienstmaier, J. (2017). Feasibility, acceptability, and clinical utility of the Cultural Formulation Interview: Mixed-methods results from the DSM-5 international field trial. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 210, 290-297.
- Lewis-Fernández, R., Aggarwal, N. K., Hinton, L., Hinton, D. E., & Kirmayer, L. J. (Eds.). (2016). *DSM-5® Handbook on the Cultural Formulation Interview*. Arlington, VA, US: American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc.
- Aggarwal, N. K., Lam, P., Jiménez-Solomon, O., Desilva, R., Margolies, P. J., Cleary, K., ... & Lewis-Fernández, R. (2018). An online training module on the Cultural Formulation Interview: The case of New York State. *Psychiatric Services*, 69(11), 1135-1137.