

FOREWORD

Guilford County has a history of welcoming immigrant and refugee groups into our community. Refugee resettlement is exemplified by the efforts of Lutheran Family Services and other organizations which work to connect refugee families with religious congregations who, in turn, provide the necessary support to acclimate refugee families into this community. We are proud of our strong record of addressing issues of racial discrimination, from the community's role in the Underground Railroad and the Civil Rights "Sit-In" activities to training community leaders in "UnDoing Racism."

However, increasingly as a community we acknowledge that these efforts are not enough. There is much more to issues of diversity and "making a community" than exists in isolated activities. In fact, we know that we must identify ways to make changes systemically in order to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse community. Guilford County statistics for children paint the same picture regarding children of color described in many other places: "...Children and adolescents of color often do not get their needs met in the present system...they are more likely to be diagnosed as seriously emotionally disturbed than their Caucasian counterparts...cultural traits, behaviors, and beliefs will likely be interpreted as weaknesses and as dysfunctional." (Stroul, B.A., *Children's Mental Health: Creating Systems of Care in a Changing Society*, 1996, p. 24.)

Since 1997, Guilford County has been one of the North Carolina sites for a federal grant from the Department of Health and Human Services Center for Mental Health Services to address the service needs of children suffering from serious emotional disturbances. Central to the implementation of this grant has been philosophical approaches to all human service delivery that create systems of care that are family centered, community based, and culturally competent. This approach encompasses a set of values and principles that, together, equal best practice. The Guilford County human services community has focused on incorporating these values and principles into our daily practice when implementing and delivering services to families and children. This has required major shifts in the "way we do business." Central to this change has been the acknowledgement of our need to be more culturally competent.

Long before the release of the 2000 Census data, citizens of Guilford County, North Carolina were well aware of the increasing diversity of their community. In a grocery store anywhere in the county one can hear multiple languages spoken. On a visit to the reception areas of any of our human service agencies one will encounter people from many cultural backgrounds. The public schools report that more than 90 different languages are native to the children

enrolled throughout our educational system. Human service providers and educators are challenged to find the best way to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population. Becoming “culturally competent” is critically important!

In recent years there have been several significant initiatives undertaken throughout the county to address this growing need. For example, the formation of the county-wide Multi-Cultural Task Force, the creation of Faith Action International House to foster increased understanding among peoples of different religions and ethnic groups, and the creation of the Center for New North Carolinians at UNCG, to name a few, are evidence of the community’s response to this need. In addition to these important undertakings, representatives of the agencies, working together to create a new system of care to meet the needs of children and families, have focused on ways the human service systems can be more responsive. Through the initiative of the Training Committee of the Community Collaborative, which oversaw the implementation of the System of Care grant, a task force has been created to develop ideas and programs to be used within their respective agencies and departments.

This Cultural Competence Task Force is responsible for the idea to publish this resource guide that focuses on the various cultural and ethnic groups living in our county. Fashioned after a resource guide discovered through training from the University of Chicago School of Medicine, the Guilford County Task Force has worked with the staff from the Center for New North Carolinians and other resource groups to develop this guide. Special acknowledgement and thanks go to Sharon Glover, who served as the technical assistant provided by the System of Care grant to the Task Force, and to the members of the Task Force representing their respective agencies: Guilford County Departments of Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Developmental Disabilities (Guilford Center), Social Services and Public Health, Guilford County Schools, UNCG’s Center for New North Carolinians and Center for the Study of Social Issues, Mental Health Association of Greensboro, Guilford County Manager’s Office and Office of Human Resources, Family Service of the Piedmont, and the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

This represents just one resource in our journey toward a culturally competent human service delivery system.

— Members of the Cultural Competency Task Force

