

Tips for Documenting with Cultural Sensitivity

Race/Ethnicity

- If family declines services due to stigma related to mental health in their community:
 - “Caregiver declined further services at this time. Clinician offered psychoeducation and allowed time for questions.”

Language

- Document when using an interpreter:
 - “Primary language used: XXX through interpreter”

Immigration

- **Do not document a family’s documentation/legal immigration status in the chart.**
- **Avoid phrases such as**, “Parent is illegal”.
- If family does not qualify for benefits due to immigration status:
 - “Patient does not meet criteria for public benefits.”
- If a Caregiver is deported:
 - “Family was separated.”
- If a Caregiver is awaiting deportation and has been removed from home:
 - “Caregiver detained.”
- If discussing how Patient/Family is impacted by the uncertainty of a family member’s legal status:
 - “Clinician and Patient/Family discussed and explored family dynamics.”
 - “Clinician and Patient/Family discussed and explored current stressors.”

Gender Identity/Sexuality

- Assume Caregiver will be reading the note, and be thoughtful about whether the Patient is out to Caregiver.
- Use gender-neutral pronouns (e.g. they/them/their).
- Refer to “Patient” or “Client” instead of birth or preferred name.
- When documenting discussions around gender, refer to these conversations as discussion on aspects of "development" or "identity.”
- If you are including more detail in your documentation, state, “Patient reported”, or “Family reported.” Be transparent about what will be included in the note and ask if there are any privacy concerns.
- Terms describing gender identity and/or sexual orientation are adjectives and should not be used as nouns
 - **Appropriate usage:** “Patient identifies as transgender.” or “Patient identifies as lesbian/gay/bisexual.”
 - **Inappropriate usage:** “Patient is a transgender.” or “Patient is a lesbian/gay/bisexual.”



Religion

- Be specific about how Patient/Family's religion translates into practice and how this may impact treatment. For example:
 - Document certain times of day the family prays and be mindful of not asking to schedule during those times.
 - Document what Patient/Family celebrates, as appropriate.
- **NOTE:** Do not assume that a family celebrates certain holidays or has certain practices solely based on their religious identity.

Family Dynamics

- If there is conflict, indicate the presence but not the specifics. For example:
 - "Mother and Patient had conflict during session related to Patient's degree of autonomy."
 - "Father reported safety concern."
- Do not directly quote Caregiver or Patient with regards to family conflict or alleged abuse. If details regarding a reported conflict or safety concern are clinically appropriate to include in the Patient's chart, review criteria to see if a **Sensitive Note** is warranted.