

CULTURE-BIASES AND STEREOTYPES

In general, discrimination refers to the hostile or negative feelings of one group of people toward another. It can cause bias in service provision and can prevent people from seeking help. Cultural competency must address the biases and stereotypes that are associated with an individual's culture and various identities.

Forms of discrimination include: **Racism:** prejudice or discrimination based on a person's race, or on the belief that one race is superior to another; **ageism:** bias toward an individual or group based on age. For example, young people may be stereotyped as immature and irresponsible; older adults may be called slow, weak, dependent and senile; **sexism:** discrimination or prejudice based on gender; **heterosexism:** prejudice against people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or intersex. It is also the assumption that all people are heterosexual and that heterosexuality is correct and normal; **homophobia:** the fear and/or dislike of homosexual people or homosexuality; **classism:** any form of prejudice or oppression against people who are members of (or who are perceived as being similar to those who are members of) a lower social class; and **religious intolerance:** an inability or unwillingness to tolerate another's beliefs or practices.

Mental health professionals and service providers must be aware of how stereotypes and stigma influence not only their clients but also their own thoughts and views of others.