

CLIENT COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH A DEI LENS

NAVIGATOR TOPIC GUIDE

Susie Crockett, B.S., CVPM (she, her)



What do client communications look like through a DEI lens?

Our goal is to create a client visit experience that acknowledges and respects the needs of our diverse clientele. We should examine our communication processes from a DEI perspective at the four critical junctions of a visit — appointment scheduling, intake, clinical exam, and discharge — and make accommodations that improve patient care and the overall client experience.

A 15-minute meeting?

The Journey for Teams educational modules are designed for a 15-minute block because veterinary workplaces are busy! We recognize that more than 15 minutes is needed to discuss client communications through a DEI lens in depth. After the meeting, we hope the team will be inspired to explore this topic further as a team or individually. Check out Susie Crockett’s resources at the end of this guide.

Let’s begin!

Refer to the [Navigator Handbook 1.0](#) and the steps below to help you lead and facilitate discussion about diversity in client communications.

1 To begin the meeting, welcome everyone to the room by name.

2 Remind the group that the culture of a Journey for Teams meeting embodies engagement, open-mindedness, respect, and compassion.



ENGAGED



OPEN-MINDED



RESPECTFUL



COMPASSIONATE

3  Play the “Client Communications Through a DEI Lens” video.

4 Read aloud the 3 take-home messages from the 3-2-1 Discussion Guide:

- **Present treatment options that you think are best for the patient without prejudging the client’s ability to pay for the services.**
- **From patient intake to discharge, ensure appropriate communication options are in place to meet the needs of your diverse clientele.** Consider communication accommodations for visually or hearing impaired clients and translation abilities for common languages within your community.
- **Educate yourself on the etiquette and cultural norms of your client population, which can allow you to communicate in the most welcoming and accurate way.**

- 5 Ask for 1-2 comments on the take-home messages. Try to keep it brief to respect the 15-minute time commitment.

- 6 Read aloud the 2 questions from the 3-2-1 Discussion Guide.

Question for the team:

When has your team encountered a barrier in communication because of a client’s diverse needs? What steps can you take to eliminate the barrier in the future?

Spend a maximum of 5 minutes discussing the team question.

Question for individual self-reflection:

No need to share answers or thoughts with anyone.

In the past, how has my prejudgment or unconscious bias influenced how I communicated with a client or colleague? Going forward, how might I try to eliminate these biases?

The most important part of the meeting

- 7 As a team, decide on **1 actionable and measurable behavior change** to implement in your workplace. Consider 1 from the list below, or come up with your own idea.

- Audit all client forms and develop translatable versions and add audio capabilities.
- Review the list of ideas attached to this document. Choose several ideas to consider implementing at your workplace.
- Connect with a community group or organization that can assist your team with cultural norms and etiquette training.

Our actionable idea

8 Invite the team to self-reflect. Team members may consider and commit to **1 personal behavior change** (no need to share them with anyone).

- Work on being less judgmental. When you encounter a situation with someone where you recognize you may be passing judgment, also focus on practicing curiosity, compassion and empathy.
- If you have observed clients with visual impairments or physical disabilities struggling with navigating any area of your workplace, suggest improvements.

9 **Thank everyone for contributing, and congratulate yourselves on how much you accomplished in 15 minutes!**

RESOURCES

Frey, W. (2018). *The US will become 'minority white' in 2045, Census projects*. The Avenue. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/03/14/the-us-will-become-minority-white-in-2045-census-projects/>

Funk, K. (2022, February 14). *What is inclusive customer service?* Accessibility. <https://www.accessibility.com/blog/what-is-inclusive-customer-service>

Galanti, G. A. (2000). An introduction to cultural differences. *The Western Journal of Medicine*, 172, 335–336. <https://doi.org/10.1136/ewjm.172.5.335>

Hastings, R. (2010). *Cultural competence: Reconsidering the handshake*. <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/global-and-cultural-effectiveness/pages/reconsideringthehandshake>

Lewis, J. (2014, November 19). *Customer diversity: Providing great customer experience across cultures*. Provider Support. <https://www.providersupport.com/blog/customer-diversity/>

Trovato, S. (2021, September 6). *5 ways to incorporate DEI into your CX practices*. DiversityQ. <https://diversityq.com/how-to-incorporate-dei-into-your-customer-experience-practices/>

The inclusion of resources by this author does not imply or constitute an endorsement by the American Veterinary Medical Association or the Veterinary Medical Association Executives.

CLIENT COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH A DEI LENS



We encourage you to consider the diverse communication needs of your clients. Here are some ideas you can implement at your workplace to serve your clientele more effectively.

Note: Although we are using examples of clients in a clinical setting, a client can also refer to anyone you interact with, such as a colleague, team member, and non-clinical client.

1. Provide translation options for languages commonly used by your clientele (for example, an app like Google Translate or translated printed brochures).
2. Provide language interpretation for the hearing impaired.
3. Plan how you will record information from a client who is visually impaired.
4. Plan and practice how your team will use virtual tools to speak to family members remotely during an appointment for clients with language or impairment barriers.
5. Research the demographics of your community (nationality, ethnicity, and religion).
6. Research etiquette and cultural norms of the community you serve.
7. Review how you greet guests when they come to the clinic. Is there a more welcoming way to address certain demographics in your workplace?
8. Create digital forms that can be easily translated or automatically read aloud.
9. Consider inclusive identity options on your forms and use clients' indicated pronouns.
10. Audit your workplace to make as much space as possible to increase accessibility.
11. Consider providing tablets or electronic devices in the exam room to aid in client communication.
12. Review active listening, tone, pitch, and volume as a team to encourage understanding and empathy without being offensive.
13. Make a list of medically relevant podcasts as educational options for clients.
14. Discuss as a team that time requirements may be different for diverse clients.
15. Confirm your clients' understanding (verbally or in writing) of at-home instructions.