



## Disability Awareness: Cultural Attitudes

Est. Time: 50 Minutes

### Objective

To understand how different cultural views can affect people's attitudes about disabilities.

### Overview

Attitudes about disabilities vary from culture to culture. Knowledge about a family's cultural beliefs and orientation can help educators work with students with disabilities during the development of the individualized education plan through the implementation of the student's educational program.

### Activity

Read the following paragraph out loud:

Different religions have different rationales to explain why disabilities occur and how they reflect on the family. Understanding the cultural perceptions of disabilities held by individual families can greatly improve home-school interactions. Educators who understand the differences among cultures will reflect that understanding when working with the families of their students with disabilities. For example, many Pacific Islanders believe that disabilities are the result of an ancestor's wrongdoing with the result being guilt and shame. Some from the Philippines view disabilities as a curse and often reject the individual with the disability. The Chamorro culture holds that a birth defect or a disability is a gift from God, and the individual with the disability is protected and sheltered by everyone in the community.

### Questions/Discussion Topics

1. Are any of the cultures described above similar to Americans' attitudes towards disability? In what ways? How are they different?
2. What would be a good plan for working with a Pacific Islander family whose child has a disability?
3. Imagine that you have two students with disabilities in your class. One is from a Philippine culture while the other is from a Chamorro culture. Describe the different as well as similar ways that you would interact with these students and their families.



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