

Guide: Translating and Culturally Adapting Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity CICT Interview Questions

Background

Sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) information collected during case investigation and contact tracing (CICT) interviews for COVID-19 is critical to understanding trends in COVID-19 cases and the impact of COVID-19 on LGBTQ communities.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) added SOGI questions developed in English to CICT interview scripts. However, in conversations with multicultural CICT interviewers, it became apparent that more work needed to be done to culturally adapt the questions for different communities beyond just translation. This brief guide – developed by MDH – outlined their process for translating and culturally adapting sexual orientation and gender identity CICT interviews questions.

Process

- LGBTQ [community liaisons](#) developed sexual orientation and gender identity question set in collaboration with CICT leadership
- LGBTQ community liaisons received feedback that case investigators felt ill-equipped to respond to interviewees when they got push-back or questions about why they were asking sexual orientation and gender identity questions.
- LGBTQ community liaisons developed quick scripts for responses to common questions/challenges they may get when asking sexual orientation and gender identity questions.
- LGBTQ community liaisons shared scripts with case interviewers in staff meetings. Case interviewers from several cultural communities provided feedback that the questions and scripts required cultural adaptation.
- LGBTQ community liaisons and CICT supervisor identified case investigators, community leaders, and community liaisons from various cultural communities to invite to culturally-specific listening sessions. Communities included in the meetings were: Somali, Ethiopian, Liberian, American Indian, Hmong, Vietnamese, Karen/Burmese, Latinx, and African American.

- LGBTQ community liaisons practiced deep listening without judgment to better understand how the different communities understand gender and sexual identities and how they may receive the CICT questions and scripts liaisons developed. LGBTQ community liaisons learned that some terms do not have direct translation into other languages and brainstormed with community members to come up with other ways to describe the identities and concepts.
- After processing the rich feedback provided by community members in the meetings, the LGBTQ community liaisons developed culturally-specific scripts (in English) for translation into Somali, Oromo, Amharic, Karen, Burmese, Hmong, Vietnamese, and Spanish. Prior to sending the scripts on to the translation services, LGBTQ community liaisons provided the scripts to meeting participants to ensure they captured what was discussed in the meetings and allow for additional comment.
- Next steps are to send the scripts to our translation service and provide back to meeting participants for final review before adding them to the CICT resources for all case interviewers to access. Meeting participants expressed the importance of being able to look over the scripts prior to rolling them out for CICT, as translators often do not have the context for how scripts will be used and may not provide appropriate translation.

Outcomes

Please see the attached English script. The adapted scripts are currently being sent for translation and final review. They will be added here as soon as they are available.

Discussion/Lessons learned

- Taking interview questions developed from one cultural lens (in this case Americans of European descent) and directly translating them into other languages not only alienates other cultural communities, but prevents good data collection. Cultural understanding must also be integrated into how questions are asked as well as how interviewers respond to potential concerns specific to a community.
- Bridging understanding between LGBTQ communities and other cultural communities through nonjudgmental listening and open conversation was enriching for both LGBTQ community liaisons and the meeting participants.
- Meeting participants expressed appreciation for being included in the process, being listened to with the goal of reaching common understanding and better serving their communities, and for having their feedback integrated into culturally-specific scripts.
- The people who will use the translated scripts should have the opportunity to review the translation before using them. Meeting participants shared that often translators are not familiar with how the scripts will be used and therefore don't provide the most useful scripts for those specific contexts.

- When discussing topics that are sensitive in different communities (like transgender and non-binary gender identities or sexuality), it is of the utmost importance to create a safe space for community members to share and truly be heard. By asking open-ended questions and repeating back what they heard, LGBTQ community liaisons were able to create an environment where meeting participants did not get defensive and could provide honest and respectful feedback.
- When interviewers need to ask questions that may be of a sensitive nature to interviewees, it is important to equip them with talking points and make yourself available for on-going support to help build their capacity to field questions and to talk about topics they may not have a lot of experience discussing. When interviewers have the tools to respond to pushback, it develops confidence and improves how interviewees receive the questions.