**Culture**
The shared values, norms, traditions, customs, beliefs, thoughts, communications, actions, history, folklore, religion, arts, and/or music, and institutions of; racial, ethnic, religious or social groups of people. Culture defines:

- How health care information is received;
- How rights and protections are exercised;
- What is considered to be a health problem;
- How symptoms and concerns about the problem are expressed;
- Who should provide treatment for the problem; and
- What type of treatment should be given.

In sum, because health care is a cultural construct, arising from beliefs about the nature of disease and the human body, cultural influences play a critical role in the delivery of health services treatment and preventive interventions. By understanding, valuing, and incorporating the cultural differences of America's diverse population and examining one's own health-related values and beliefs, health care organizations, practitioners, and others can support a health care system that responds appropriately to, and directly serves the unique needs of populations whose cultures may be different from the prevailing culture (Katz, Michael. Personal communication, November 1998)