

# Structural Competency Training Series for Kidney Professionals



## Module 1: Identifying Structures and Health among Patients with End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD)

### What is structural competency?

**Structural competency** is the capacity for health professionals to recognize and respond to health and illness as the downstream effects of broad social, political, and economic structures.<sup>1</sup> It serves as a *framework* for exploring the effects of such structures on health outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

These **social structures** indicate the policies, economic systems, and other institutions that have produced and maintained social inequities and health disparities, often along the lines of social categories such as *race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability*.<sup>1,2</sup>

*These social structures may include...*<sup>3</sup>

#### **Physical Conditions**

- Unstable housing
- Lack of access to healthcare
- Dialysis units in disinvested neighborhoods

#### **Social Conditions**

- Unmet transportation needs
- Lack of caregiver support
- Low health literacy

Understanding these key terms are important for the development of structural competency:

#### **Structural Violence**

A term that describes how these social structures can cause harm.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Structural Vulnerability**

The risk experienced as a result of structural violence.<sup>1</sup>

**Structural competency emphasizes the upstream factors that influence kidney disease care, including the laws, policies, and regulations that create conditions affecting individuals with ESRD.**

#### References:

1. Structural Competency Working Group. Available at [www.structcomp.org](http://www.structcomp.org).
2. Neff J, Knight K, Satterwhite S, Nelson N, Matthews J, Holmes S. Teaching structure: A qualitative evaluation of a structural competency training for resident physicians. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. 2020; 32(4): 430-433.
3. Rizzolo K, Cervantes L, Shen J. Racial and ethnic disparities in home dialysis use in the United States: Barriers and solutions. *Journal of the American Society of Nephrology*. 2022; 33(7): 1258-1261.