# Lao Culture - At a Glance

**Common cultural norms, values, and traits of the Lao population**

## Traditional Beliefs on Health and Medicine
- Depending on a person’s level of education and exposure, Western medicine competes or combines with folk practices.
- Many believe in a balance and imbalance of humors that can be remedied by diet and herbal medicines.
- Many believe in spirit loss. If this occurs, a baci, or shamanistic ceremony may be performed.

## Gender
- Men are generally recognized as the head of household for religious and political purposes.
- In rural areas, men and women tend to share work.
- Men are generally involved in the political sector, with women more likely to be in charge of trade and private life.
- Women are usually responsible for household chores.

## Familial Structure
- Laos has 49 ethnic groups, there are many differences in family structure.
- Inheritance is often equal among sons and daughters. However, in some areas the youngest daughter inherits the main household so that she may care for her aging parents.
- Although some regions are patrilineal, with men moving to join their bride’s family.

## Religion
- The ethnic Lao and some Thai groups are Theravada Buddhists.
- There are many shamanistic beliefs that involve house, village, district, city, and realm spirits.
- There are many various beliefs concerning sacred places and objects.

## Personal Space & Social Gestures
- Careful attention to one’s place in the social hierarchy is important. Intentionally flouting hierarchical norms causes conflict.
- Polite forms of speech and body movements are important.
- Body contact is avoided in public, especially between men and women.

## Communication Styles
- Superiors are greeted by clasping one’s hands in a prayer motion combined with a slight bow.
- Avoiding conflict or any actions that will cause emotional discomfort is important.

## About ECHO
The mission of ECHO is to leverage partnerships to deliver vital health, safety, emergency and civic engagement information to help the ever-changing, diverse population integrate and become successful in our communities.

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The above information was provided by [http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Laos.html](http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Laos.html)

This information sheet is not intended to be an exhaustive approach or complete representation of the Lao culture, but rather a basic introduction and foundation.