

# Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) What, Why and How



# What is CLAS?

CLAS is services that are respectful of and responsive to each person's culture and communication needs.



CLAS helps you take into account:

- Cultural health beliefs
- Preferred languages
- Health literacy levels
- Communication needs



CLAS helps make your services:

- Respectful
- Understandable
- Effective
- Equitable



## What are the National CLAS Standards?

The National CLAS Standards gives your health organization action steps for providing CLAS. They offer guidance in the areas of:



Governance, Leadership,  
and Workforce



Communication and  
Language Assistance



Engagement,  
Continuous Improvement,  
and Accountability

The Office of Minority Health developed the Standards in 2013 to:



Advance health equity



Improve quality



Help eliminate disparities

# How do health organizations implement the National CLAS Standards?

We studied 13 U.S. hospitals, public health departments, and ambulatory care centers to examine how they provide CLAS and use the National CLAS Standards.

Here are some of the CLAS activities we learned about.



## Governance, Leadership, and Workforce

- Train staff in CLAS
- Recruit a workforce representative of community served
- Create and support a designated CLAS position



## Communication and Language Assistance

- Offer comprehensive language assistance services
- Require interpreters' skills to be certified or assessed
- Use advanced technology for interpretation services



## Engagement, Continuous Improvement, and Accountability

- Improve collection of race, ethnicity, and language data
- Conduct organizational assessments
- Incorporate CLAS into mission, vision, and strategic plans

In their words, organizational leaders explain what makes implementation easier:

“Leadership support”

“Community engagement”

“A CLAS champion”

“Collaboration across the organization”

“Organizational culture of continuous improvement”

# Why do health organizations implement the National CLAS Standards?

They seek to improve...

and thereby increase...

## STAFF:

- Cultural competency
- Language services use
- Quality of services



## CLIENT:

- Satisfaction
- Engagement
- Experience



In their words, organizational leaders explain the Standards:

“A framework for thinking about how to make our services, programs, organizations culturally responsive.”

“They help organizations embed being respectful of [individuals’] culture and language as they move through their healthcare journey.”

“A guide to help you provide better services to the people you serve.”

## Where can you learn more?

### [www.ThinkCulturalHealth.hhs.gov](http://www.ThinkCulturalHealth.hhs.gov)

- The Blueprint - an implementation guide for the Standards
- E-learning Programs - accredited for various health professionals
- Resource Library - searchable clearinghouse of publications and tools

### [www.MinorityHealth.hhs.gov](http://www.MinorityHealth.hhs.gov)

- Knowledge Center - depository of health disparities information
- Events Calendar - trainings, conferences, and other events in health
- Blog - health equity and CLAS topics

**“Many Americans struggle to achieve good health because the health care and services that are available to them do not adequately address their needs. As our nation becomes increasingly diverse, improving cultural and linguistic competency across public health and our health care system can be one of our most powerful levers for advancing health equity.”**

J. Nadine Gracia, MD, MSCE  
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health