



National CLAS Standards: Fact Sheet

Purpose

The enhanced National CLAS Standards are intended to advance health equity, improve quality, and help eliminate health care disparities by establishing a blueprint for individuals as well as health and health care organizations to implement culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

The enhanced Standards are a comprehensive series of guidelines that inform, guide, and facilitate practices related to culturally and linguistically appropriate health services.

History & Enhancement Initiative

The National CLAS Standards were first developed by the HHS Office of Minority Health in 2000. Following 10 years of successful implementation, the Office of Minority Health launched an initiative to update the Standards to reflect the tremendous growth in the field of cultural and linguistic competency since 2000 and the increasing diversity of the nation.

The Enhancement Initiative lasted from 2010 to 2013, and it had three major components: a public comment period, a systematic literature review, and ongoing consultations with an advisory committee comprised of leaders and experts from a variety of settings in the public and private sectors.

The Case for the National CLAS Standards

The enhanced National CLAS Standards were developed in response to health and health care disparities, changing demographics, and legal and accreditation requirements. With the Institute of Medicine's publication of *Unequal Treatment* in 2003, culturally and linguistically appropriate services gained recognition as an important way to help address the persistent disparities faced by our nation's diverse communities. There have also been rapid changes in demographic trends in the U.S. in the last decade. Additionally, national accreditation standards for professional licensure in the fields of medicine and nursing, and health care policies, such as the Affordable Care Act, have also helped to underscore the importance of cultural and linguistic competency as part of high quality health care and services.

The enhanced National CLAS Standards address these new developments and trends, and offer an even stronger framework to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services. The enhanced National CLAS Standards are intended to advance health equity, improve quality, and help eliminate health care disparities.

Enhancements to the National CLAS Standards

The enhanced National CLAS Standards have a broader reach to address the importance of cultural and linguistic competency at every point of contact throughout the health care and health services continuum. Specifically, the Standards' conceptualization of culture, audience, health, and recipients were expanded:





National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care

Expanded Standards	National CLAS Standards 2000	National CLAS Standards 2013
Culture	Defined in terms of racial, ethnic and linguistic groups	Defined in terms of racial, ethnic and linguistic groups, as well as geographical, religious and spiritual, biological and sociological characteristics
Audience	Health care organizations	Health and health care organizations
Health	Definition of health was implicit	Explicit definition of health to include physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being
Recipients	Patients and consumers	Individuals and groups

Given this conceptual foundation, the enhanced National CLAS Standards are structured as follows:

- Principal Standard (Standard 1): Provide effective, equitable, understandable, and respectful quality care and services that are responsive to diverse cultural health beliefs and practices, preferred languages, health literacy, and other communication needs.
- Governance, Leadership, and Workforce (Standards 2-4)
- Communication and Language Assistance (Standards 5-8)
- Engagement, Continuous Improvement, and Accountability (Standards 9-15)

Implementation Resource: *The Blueprint*

The Standards' implementation "on the ground" will vary from organization to organization. It is important for individuals and organizations to have a vision of what culturally and linguistically appropriate services will look like in practice and to identify available and required resources.

A Blueprint for Advancing and Sustaining CLAS Policy and Practice, or *The Blueprint*, is a new guidance document for the National CLAS Standards that discusses implementation strategies for each Standard. This resource and others relating to the National CLAS Standards are available at OMH's Think Cultural Health website: www.ThinkCulturalHealth.hhs.gov.

Next Steps

Successful implementation of the enhanced National CLAS Standards will depend on continued collaboration from the diverse stakeholders, as well as health care consumers. Please visit www.ThinkCulturalHealth.hhs.gov to learn more about promotion activities, collaboration opportunities, technical assistance, assessment and evaluation. Take action now by emailing your experiences related to CLAS to AdvancingCLAS@ThinkCulturalHealth.hhs.gov.

