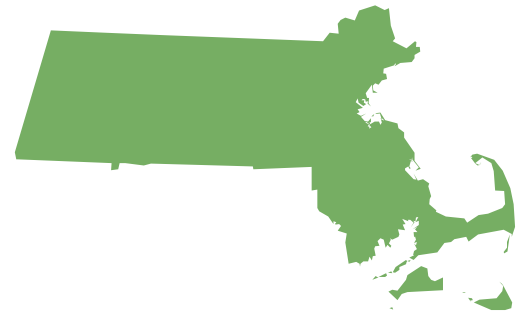


Massachusetts



National CLAS Standards Planning, Policies, and Collaboration

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Office of Health Equity is implementing a CLAS initiative in three phases. CLAS I (2005–2010) developed strategies and tools for adoption of the National CLAS Standards in Massachusetts. CLAS II (2010–2013) focused on implementation and piloting of CLAS efforts and tools by the department and in the health and human services provider community. CLAS III (2013–2015) focuses on the sustainability and evaluation of CLAS efforts.

In an effort to identify gaps, priorities, and opportunities to implement the National CLAS Standards internally, the Department of Public Health completed an internal [CLAS Standards self-assessment](#)¹ in 2008 and 2011. Program managers representing every bureau in the department reported data. The findings and recommendations were presented to department executives, and follow-up meetings were held with several bureaus to identify priorities, goals, and strategies. A third internal assessment is targeted for implementation during CLAS III. The Department of Public Health also has required agencies that apply for direct service contracts to complete a [self-assessment](#)² form. Initially, agencies rated their CLAS implementation progress using a five-point scale, but this was changed in CLAS II to a multiple-choice format that gives agencies more specific guidance. The self-assessment tool also requires that agencies detail how they plan to work on a CLAS-specific goal during the contract period. A separate staff demographics table provides the department with the racial breakdown and language capacity of agency staff.

During CLAS I, the Office of Health Equity established eight [CLAS Initiative Committees](#)³ to help move its work forward in the elimination of health disparities. The committees focused on internal assessment, guidance

manual, internal policy, training, communications, community participation, procurement, evaluation, and coordination. Subsequently, as part of the [CLAS Coordinating Committee](#),⁴ working groups have been established as needed to carry out specific tasks and projects. The CLAS Coordinating Committee provides leadership for the CLAS initiative and ensures that the initiative meets its objectives. The committee engages in strategic planning, identifies strategic alliances, and oversees implementation of work plans and evaluations of the initiative. The committee also developed a strategic sustainability plan that laid out areas for seamless integration of CLAS policies into all work by the Department of Public Health.

National CLAS Standards Training and Technical Assistance

The Massachusetts Office of Health Equity has developed CLAS trainings and presentations for internal and external groups and organizations. The CLAS Training Series⁵ provides information to various audiences (department staff, contracted vendors, community groups) on how to improve the quality of the services they provide to diverse members of the community. The video, “Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services Standards: An Overview,” is available on the Office of Health Equity website. Interested individuals can contact CLAS@state.ma.us for information about other trainings in the series.

National CLAS Standards Dissemination

The Massachusetts Office of Health Equity developed [Making CLAS Happen: Six Areas for Action](#),⁶ a manual on providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services in public health settings. The purpose of the manual is to help organizations with implementing the National CLAS Standards. It also serves as the main tool for the CLAS

training efforts. It offers innovative and practical approaches for organizations to incorporate the CLAS principles and practices in all activities. It includes six chapters covering the 15 National CLAS Standards:

- Foster cultural competence;
- Build community partnerships;
- Collect and share diversity data;
- Benchmark: plan and evaluate;
- Reflect and respect diversity; and
- Ensure language access.

Each chapter includes hands-on tools, resource lists, and case studies from public health and social service providers across Massachusetts. The guide also includes a glossary of terms and acronyms, as well as a CLAS self-assessment tool to help programs identify needs and develop a work plan to implement the National CLAS Standards.

The Office of Health Equity also established a [CLAS Initiative website](#)⁷ to disseminate the National CLAS Standards and promote activities related to the CLAS initiative. The website provides an overview of the National CLAS Standards; information about the CLAS Coordinating Committee; contact information for the CLAS initiative coordinator; and links to the Making CLAS Happen guide, CLAS Training Series, CLAS Agency Self-Assessment forms, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Language Access Plan.

Endnotes

- 1 Massachusetts Department of Public Health. (n.d.). *CLAS Self-Assessment Tool*. Retrieved November 19, 2014, from Massachusetts Department of Public Health: <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/health-equity/clas-self-assessment-fy15.pdf>.
- 2 Massachusetts Department of Public Health. (n.d.). *CLAS Self-Assessment Form*. Retrieved November 19, 2014, from Massachusetts Department of Public Health: <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/health-equity/clas-agency-self-assessment.pdf>.
- 3 Massachusetts Department of Public Health. (n.d.). *Initiative Committees*. Retrieved November 19, 2014, from CLAS Initiative: Massachusetts Department of Public Health: <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/admin/health-equity/clas/initiative-committees.html>.
- 4 Massachusetts Department of Public Health. (n.d.). *Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Initiative Committee Descriptions 2010–2011*. Retrieved November 19, 2014, from CLAS Initiative: Massachusetts Department of Public Health: <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/health-equity/clas-subcommittee-description.pdf>.
- 5 Massachusetts Department of Public Health. (n.d.). *Training Series*. Retrieved December 19, 2014, from CLAS Initiative: Massachusetts Department of Public Health: <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/admin/health-equity/clas/training-series.html>.
- 6 Massachusetts Department of Public Health. (n.d.). *Making CLAS Happen*. Retrieved December 19, 2014, from CLAS Initiative: Massachusetts Department of Public Health: <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/admin/health-equity/clas/making-clas-happen.html>.
- 7 Massachusetts Department of Public Health. (n.d.). *Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Initiative*. Retrieved December 19, 2014, from Massachusetts Department of Public Health: <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/admin/health-equity/clas>.