

# Rhode Island



## National CLAS Standards Planning, Policies, and Collaboration

The Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Community, Family Health, and Equity launched a [CLAS Initiative](#)<sup>1</sup> in an effort to reduce health disparities and better serve the state's limited English proficiency communities. The Department of Health develops policies, guidance, and tools to implement the National CLAS Standards. It also collaborates with health care partners to improve access to language assistance services, promote culturally competent care, and implement organizational supports. Accomplishments include incorporating language in all contracts and other procurement documents to require entities that receive Department of Health funding to adhere to the National CLAS Standards; developing and distributing I Speak brochures; and investigating language access complaints filed against hospitals, private health care facilities, and health centers.

The [Rhode Island Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living 2006–2012](#)<sup>2</sup> outlines objectives and strategies to help prevent and reduce obesity and related chronic diseases, including implementation of the National CLAS Standards. Strategies include advocating for medical and allied health schools and continuing medical education to include the National CLAS Standards in training on obesity assessment, counseling, and treatment; providing training for health care providers regarding referral guidelines, best practices, and the National CLAS Standards; and using the National CLAS Standards in developing training recommendations for educational institutions and certifying recommendations for accrediting organizations.

In the [Rhode Island Diabetes State Plan](#)<sup>3</sup> for 2010–2015, the Department of Health and the Rhode Island Diabetes Prevention and Control Program established that all Rhode Island Chronic Care Collaborative sites will have written policies and oversight mechanisms to bring them into compliance with the mandatory National CLAS Standards.

Activities for achieving this goal include disseminating the National CLAS Standards to all sites, monitoring progress, and identifying sites not in compliance.

## National CLAS Standards Training and Technical Assistance

The Rhode Island Oral Health Commission provides annual mini-residency programs that provide continuing education to oral health professionals on the National CLAS Standards.<sup>4</sup> In the Rhode Island Department of Health's Division of Community, Family Health, and Equity, the Chronic Care and Disease Management Team has supported National CLAS Standards training for registration clerks at hospitals.<sup>5</sup>

## National CLAS Standards Dissemination

The Rhode Island Department of Health created a [CLAS Standards Crosswalk](#)<sup>6</sup> in collaboration with the Hospital Association of Rhode Island to address the National CLAS Standards and language access between health care providers and patients. The document lists regulations, laws, and credentials for federal, state, and accreditation bodies that address the National CLAS Standards and language access.

The Department of Health's Refugee Health Program created the [Rhode Island Refugee Health Program Providers' Manual](#)<sup>7</sup> as a resource for health care and social service providers who serve refugees. The chapter on linguistically appropriate services for refugees provides information on the National CLAS Standards and their importance for facilitating health care for culturally diverse populations.

Several teams of the Division of Community, Family Health, and Equity have disseminated the National CLAS Standards through CLAS Initiative activities. The Health Disparities and Access to Care Team launched a 2011 Language Access

Campaign to inform Rhode Island residents with limited English proficiency of their rights and responsibilities related to accessing interpreters and translated information in health care settings. The team also worked with hospitals, private providers, and other health care delivery organizations to establish policies and operational systems that ensure access to interpreters and translated health information for persons with limited English proficiency. The Perinatal and Early Childhood Health Team has supported the use of the National CLAS Standards for all maternal and child health home visitors.<sup>5</sup>

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## Endnotes

- 1 Rhode Island Department of Health. (2015). *CLAS Initiative*. Retrieved March 8, 2016, from Rhode Island Department of Health: [http://health.ri.gov/programs/detail.php?pgm\\_id=16](http://health.ri.gov/programs/detail.php?pgm_id=16).
- 2 Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Community, Family Health, and Equity. (2006, July). *Rhode Island's Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living 2006–2012*. Retrieved January 13, 2014, from Rhode Island Department of Health: <http://www.health.ri.gov/publications/plans/2006-2012HealthyEatingAndActiveLiving.pdf>.
- 3 Rhode Island Department of Health. (2010, July). *Rhode Island Diabetes State Plan 2010-2015*. Retrieved January 13, 2015, from Rhode Island Department of Health: <http://www.health.ri.gov/publications/stateplans/2010-2015Diabetes.pdf>.
- 4 Rhode Island Oral Health Commission, Rhode Island Department of Health. (2011, January). *Rhode Island Oral Health Plan, 2011–2016*. Retrieved January 13, 2015, from Rhode Island Department of Health: <http://www.health.ri.gov/publications/plans/2011OralHealth.pdf>.
- 5 Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Community, Family Health, and Equity. (2012). *Equity Pyramids*. Retrieved January 13, 2015, from Rhode Island Department of Health: <http://www.health.ri.gov/publications/books/EquityPyramid.pdf>.
- 6 Rhode Island Department of Health. (2011, February). *CLAS Standards Crosswalk*. Retrieved January 13, 2015, from Rhode Island Department of Health: <http://www.health.ri.gov/publications/guidebooks/CLASStandardCrosswalk.pdf>.
- 7 Rhode Island Department of Health, Refugee Health Program. (2007, May). *Refugee Health Providers' Manual*. Retrieved March 9, 2016, from PDF Filler: <https://www.pdfiller.com/11273840-RefugeeHealthProviderspdf-Refugee-health-providers-manual---Rhode-Island-Department-of---health-ri-Various-Fillable-Forms-health-ri>.