

# Think Cultural Health

March 2024 Newsletter

The [Think Cultural Health](#) newsletter highlights Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in action. CLAS is a way for health and health care professionals to provide respectful and responsive services, improve quality of care, and advance health equity. To guide organizations in providing CLAS, the HHS Office of Minority Health (OMH) developed a set of 15 action steps called the [National CLAS Standards](#).

## Announcing TCH's New E-learning Program for Nurses!



We are excited to announce an all-new e-learning program for nurses from Think Cultural Health! [CLAS in Nursing](#) aims to equip nurses with essential skills to deliver equitable, respectful, patient-centered care. The program presents strategies for improving self-awareness, combating implicit bias, practicing cultural competency and cultural humility, and communicating effectively.

CLAS in Nursing offers four free continuing nursing education credits. Nursing students and other professionals may earn a certificate of completion. The program consists of four courses with engaging case studies and opportunities for self-reflection. It also offers a Resource Library with additional information and tools.

Why is CLAS in nursing important? Understanding, respecting, and responding to patients' needs and preferences helps nurses ensure the highest quality of care for all patients. As the largest profession in the healthcare workforce, nurses are uniquely positioned to improve patient experiences and outcomes, and CLAS is a vital strategy for doing so.

We invite all nurses and nursing students to join us in our mission to advance health equity through the provision of CLAS. [Enroll in CLAS in Nursing today.](#)

[Visit the TCH Nurses Program](#)

## CLAS and Community Health Workers: A Case Study



[Virtua Health](#) – a comprehensive, non-profit academic healthcare system in the South New Jersey and Philadelphia area – provides CLAS in innovative and strategic ways to improve health outcomes for the marginalized communities it serves. Its community health worker programs are an exciting example of how healthcare systems can advance health equity by implementing OMH's National CLAS Standards, including employing a diverse workforce that is responsive to the communities served (Standard 3) and understanding community needs and offering services that meet those needs (Standard 12).

### Community Health Workers

Virtua Health is committed to bringing resources and services directly to communities. It strategically addresses barriers to access through care innovations enabled by technology and deeply-rooted community connections. It has heavily invested in community programs such as its mobile farmers market, pediatric mobile health services, and mobile health and cancer screening unit. Virtua Health also offers person-to-person programming through its Healthy Neighbor program. Healthy Neighbor is a model co-developed by Virtua Health and Medtronic LABS that delivers a high-touch community health worker (CHW) program in which CHWs meet with patients in their homes to help them achieve better health. CHWs serve as Virtua Health's frontline presence in its communities, providing social support, advocacy, and resource navigation; conducting health and wellbeing check-ins; and connecting patients with follow-up clinic appointments. As a demographically diverse workforce, CHWs' delivery of culturally and linguistically appropriate services can improve patient engagement and communication, access to and use of healthcare services, and adherence to health recommendations.

### Advancing Equity in Camden, New Jersey

Let's look at Virtua Health's efforts in chronic disease management in Camden, New Jersey, as an example. Virtua Health trains culturally and linguistically representative CHWs in Camden to build strong relationships with residents; provide diabetes and hypertension health education, screening, and monitoring; and collaborate with individuals to identify barriers to chronic disease management and work toward solutions. The overall aim is to improve clinical and social outcomes for Camden residents and ultimately increase life expectancy, which varies in Camden County by as much as 16 years across different populations and neighborhoods.

"People are the core. We know there's a lot of success in having a people-centered approach enabled by tech," said Dan Master, director of health equity at Virtua Health. "We see it as innovation."

### A Call to Action

Think Cultural Health encourages health care leaders and professionals to use the [National CLAS Standards](#) as a framework for improving quality, reducing disparities, and advancing equity. Think Cultural Health also offers free e-learning programs for a range of health professionals, including one for community health workers called [Promoting Healthy Choices and Community Changes](#), available in English and Spanish.

[Visit Think Cultural Health](#)

## Updated HHS Plan Increases Language Access



In November 2023, HHS issued its updated [Language Access Plan](#) as part of its efforts to ensure greater access to the life-saving services that it provides for people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and for people with disabilities. The updated HHS Language Access Plan sets forth practical guidance, best practices, and action steps for HHS Operating and Staff Divisions to develop agency-specific language access plans. The plan also calls for agencies to collect data regarding their language access services to increase access to their respective programs, activities, and services for persons with LEP.

The HHS Language Access Plan is a critical step toward making health care and human services accessible to all. In the [HHS press release](#) announcing the updated plan, Secretary Xavier Becerra said,

"It is 2023 and the fact that kids still have the same experience I had of translating complex medical information for my parents is unacceptable. Children, family members, and others should not be held responsible for translating language assistance services (oral interpreter services and translated written materials) that are (1) free of charge, (2) accurate and timely, and (3) protect the privacy and independence of the patient.

Effective and respectful communication is essential to clinical care. If the care process or a patient's symptoms are not clearly understood, the quality of care provided may be hindered. Miscommunication can lead to dangerous medical mistakes (e.g., taking medication incorrectly).

For more information about communication and language assistance services, visit Think Cultural Health's [Communication Guide](#). It offers information for administrators on planning, implementing, and evaluating language services, and it offers information for providers on cross-cultural

[Visit TCH's Communication Guide](#)

## Women's History Month

March is Women's History Month and Think Cultural Health would like to express appreciation for all the women physicians, nurses and think workers, counselors, and more who are committed to delivering respectful, equitable health services. At the same time, we would like to acknowledge that women experience disparities in access to quality healthcare services – particularly Black women, American Indian/Alaskan Native women, and LGBTQI+ women.

Stark racial disparities in maternal health are partially attributed to provider implicit and explicit racial bias, making CLAS an important strategy for ensuring the delivery of high-quality maternal health care. Think Cultural Health offers a free, accredited, two-hour e-learning program called [CLAS in Maternal Health Care](#). It covers cultural competency, cultural humility, person-centered care, combating implicit bias, effective communication, and more. If you are a maternal health care provider, [enroll today](#) to learn more about how to advance maternal health equity.

## ABOUT THINK CULTURAL HEALTH

Think Cultural Health is a website of the Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that provides health and healthcare professionals with information, continuing education opportunities, resources, and more to learn about culturally and linguistically appropriate services, or CLAS.