

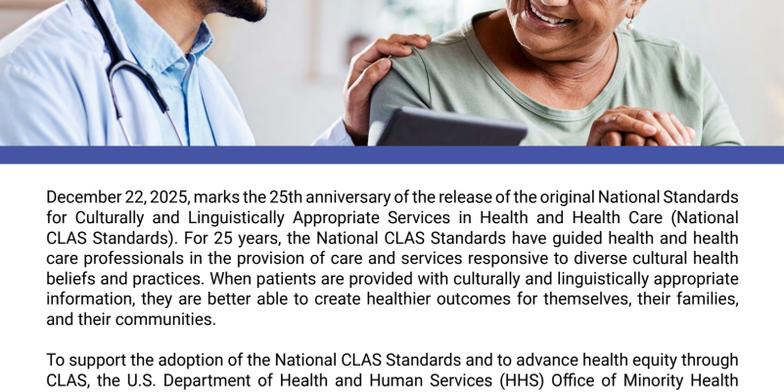


Think Cultural Health

December 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](#).

Celebrating CLAS Milestones



December 22, 2025, marks the 25th anniversary of the release of the original National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care (National CLAS Standards). For 25 years, the National CLAS Standards have guided health and health care professionals in the provision of care and services responsive to diverse cultural health beliefs and practices. When patients are provided with culturally and linguistically appropriate information, they are better able to create healthier outcomes for themselves, their families, and their communities.

To support the adoption of the National CLAS Standards and to advance health equity through CLAS, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Minority Health (OMH) established Think Cultural Health (TCH) in 2004. The initiative offers resources, training, and guidance for health care professionals to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps by providing CLAS, educating over a million health professionals. In its 20th year, TCH remains a cornerstone of efforts to ensure that everyone, regardless of background, receives respectful and effective health care services. TCH offers free e-learning programs and houses the National CLAS Standards, which guide how to improve the quality of services provided to all individuals, which will ultimately help reduce health disparities and promote health equity.

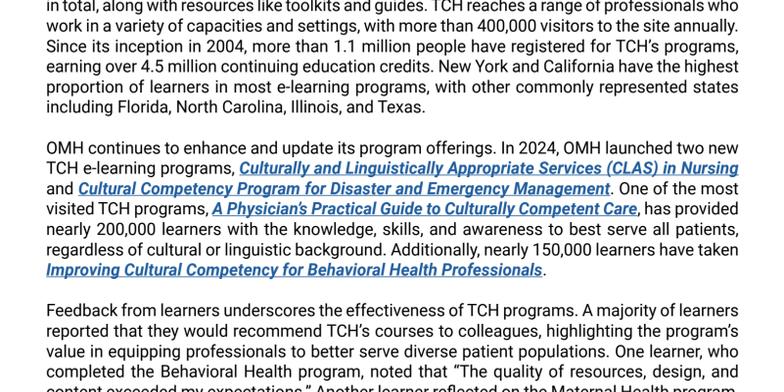
OMH Deputy Director for Programs Roslyn Moore reflected on the impact of the National CLAS Standards and Think Cultural Health, noting:

“Think Cultural Health and the National CLAS Standards offer critical tools to empower health professionals to center the dignity and respect of every patient. Since 2000, the National CLAS Standards have provided a comprehensive framework for delivering health care services that are respectful, understandable, and culturally responsive. By prioritizing inclusivity and cultural awareness, Think Cultural Health resources have guided over a million professionals in fostering environments where all patients feel valued and understood, elevating the standard of care.”

Join OMH in celebrating its CLAS milestones by visiting the TCH site for training, resources, and more. We encourage readers to share TCH with their networks.

[Visit Think Cultural Health](#)

Think Cultural Health’s Impact



Think Cultural Health (TCH) has become an invaluable resource for health professionals seeking to deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate care. TCH offers nine free e-learning programs in total, along with resources like toolkits and guides. TCH reaches a range of professionals who work in a variety of capacities and settings, with more than 400,000 visitors to the site annually. Since its inception in 2004, more than 1.1 million people have registered for TCH’s programs, earning over 4.5 million continuing education credits. New York and California have the highest proportion of learners in most e-learning programs, with other commonly represented states including Florida, North Carolina, Illinois, and Texas.

OMH continues to enhance and update its program offerings. In 2024, OMH launched two new TCH e-learning programs, [Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services \(CLAS\) in Nursing](#) and [Cultural Competency Program for Disaster and Emergency Management](#). One of the most visited TCH programs, [A Physician’s Practical Guide to Culturally Competent Care](#), has provided nearly 200,000 learners with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to best serve all patients, regardless of cultural or linguistic background. Additionally, nearly 150,000 learners have taken [Improving Cultural Competency for Behavioral Health Professionals](#).

Feedback from learners underscores the effectiveness of TCH programs. A majority of learners reported that they would recommend TCH’s courses to colleagues, highlighting the program’s value in equipping professionals to better serve diverse patient populations. One learner, who completed the Behavioral Health program, noted that “The quality of resources, design, and content exceeded my expectations.” Another learner reflected on the Maternal Health program, stating that they enjoyed the course and that “I will go back to the resources many times after the course is done.” This high level of engagement and positive reception reflects TCH’s success in meeting the needs of health care professionals and advancing equity in health care.

Visit Think Cultural Health to learn more about our e-learning programs.

[Visit Think Cultural Health](#)

Think Cultural Health’s Health Equity Timeline



The [Health Equity Timeline](#) on the Think Cultural Health website lists major advances in addressing health disparities in the United States and improving health outcomes across diverse communities. This timeline highlights key legislative actions, influential reports, and the establishment of health programs dedicated to advancing health equity.

The first entry on the timeline, the release of the [1985 Report of the Secretary’s Task Force on Black and Minority Health](#), often referred to as the [Heckler Report](#), marks the beginning of HHS’s efforts to mobilize a national response to eliminating health and health care disparities. The Heckler Report emphasized the need for national awareness of health inequities, prompting initiatives that continue to shape health care policy today. Following the Heckler Report, the [Office of Minority Health](#) (OMH) was established in 1986 to coordinate health improvement initiatives for racial and ethnic minority populations.

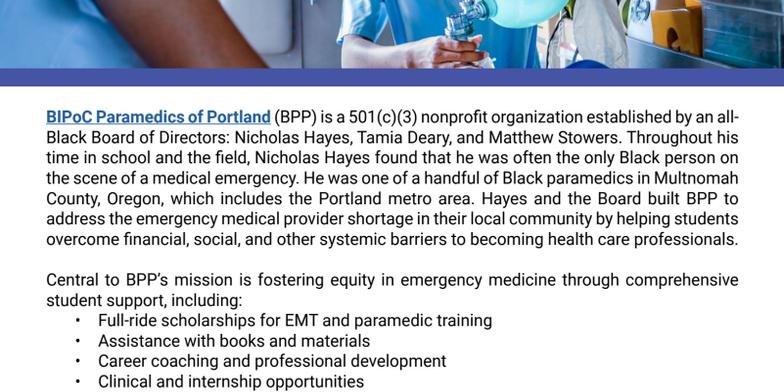
The promotion of CLAS has been a cornerstone health improvement initiative in the work to eliminate health disparities and advance health equity. OMH published the [National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care](#) in 2000 and updated them in 2013. The National CLAS Standards are a set of 15 action steps intended to advance health equity, improve quality, and help eliminate health care disparities by providing a blueprint for individuals and health and health care organizations to implement culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

These milestones and many others presented in the timeline showcase the country’s commitment to reducing disparities, improving access, and fostering a health care environment that respects cultural diversity.

Visit the Health Equity Timeline today to learn more about the history of health equity.

[Visit the Health Equity Timeline](#)

New TCH Program for Disaster and Emergency Professionals



Think Cultural Health recently introduced a new e-learning program, the [Cultural Competency Program for Disaster and Emergency Management](#), designed for professionals such as first responders, emergency managers, and social workers. The program aims to enhance emergency professionals’ abilities to serve diverse communities effectively during crises. This program trains participants to deliver equitable, respectful, and person-centered support across all disaster phases. It describes the role of cultural identities in disaster response and community-inclusive planning. Additionally, participants can earn up to nine free continuing education credits.

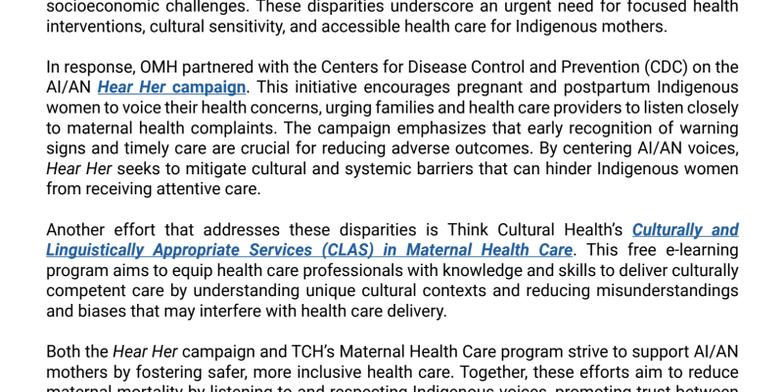
Sandy Hunter, PhD, NRP, Assistant Professor of Emergency Medical Science at Wake Technical Community College, was one of over 30 experts who guided the design of the program. Dr. Hunter notes, “Providing compassionate high-quality health care is both a responsibility and a privilege. Doing so requires that all health care providers and first responders understand and appreciate the myriad of cultures and other differences we may encounter. This program helps participants to build a foundation of understanding with which we can better serve our communities.”

Since its soft launch on July 30, 2024, 1,888 learners have earned more than 5,449 continuing education credits. Participants report gaining valuable skills for enhancing communication with diverse communities, feeling better equipped to understand cultural identities in disaster scenarios, and improving their ability to deliver culturally responsive care.

Enroll in the [Cultural Competency Program for Disaster and Emergency Management](#) today.

[Visit the Disaster and Emergency Management Program](#)

Community Spotlight: BIPOC Paramedics of Portland



[BIPOC Paramedics of Portland](#) (BPP) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established by an all-Black Board of Directors: Nicholas Hayes, Tamia Deary, and Matthew Stowers. Throughout his time in school and the field, Nicholas Hayes found that he was often the only Black person on the scene of a medical emergency. He was one of a handful of Black paramedics in Multnomah County, Oregon, which includes the Portland metro area. Hayes and the Board built BPP to address the emergency medical provider shortage in their local community by helping students overcome financial, social, and other systemic barriers to becoming health care professionals.

Central to BPP’s mission is fostering equity in emergency medicine through comprehensive student support, including:

- Full-ride scholarships for EMT and paramedic training
- Assistance with books and materials
- Career coaching and professional development
- Clinical and internship opportunities
- Community outreach and engagement

BPP recognizes that diversity among first responders is a critical component of effective, culturally competent care. By supporting individuals from marginalized communities to enter the medical field, they help build a workforce better equipped to respond to the needs of diverse populations during emergencies.

Since its founding in March 2024, BPP has achieved remarkable milestones, including securing its 501(c)(3) status, receiving the donation of an ambulance from a generous supporter, and raising funds for its first full-ride EMT scholarship. In tandem with expanding their programming, they are also working to establish an endowment fund that will indefinitely support the education of two paramedics and five EMTs annually.

BPP’s commitment aligns closely with Think Cultural Health’s [Cultural Competency Program for Disaster and Emergency Management](#). This program equips emergency response professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care during disasters and emergencies.

[Learn more about the BIPOC Paramedics of Portland](#)

Celebrating Native American Heritage Month

As Native American Heritage Month comes to a close, TCH commits to empowering health care professionals and community partners to provide American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities with the best possible care. AI/AN communities face some of the highest maternal mortality rates in the United States, with rates two to three times those for non-Hispanic white women. Contributing factors include limited health care access, cultural barriers, and socioeconomic challenges. These disparities underscore an urgent need for focused health interventions, cultural sensitivity, and accessible health care for Indigenous mothers.

In response, OMH partnered with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the AI/AN [Hear Her campaign](#). This initiative encourages pregnant and postpartum Indigenous women to voice their health concerns, urging families and health care providers to listen closely to maternal health complaints. The campaign emphasizes that early recognition of warning signs and timely care are crucial for reducing adverse outcomes. By centering AI/AN voices, [Hear Her](#) seeks to mitigate cultural and systemic barriers that can hinder Indigenous women from receiving attentive care.

Another effort that addresses these disparities is Think Cultural Health’s [Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services \(CLAS\) in Maternal Health Care](#). This free e-learning program aims to equip health care professionals with knowledge and skills to deliver culturally competent care by understanding unique cultural contexts and reducing misunderstandings and biases that may interfere with health care delivery.

Both the [Hear Her](#) campaign and TCH’s Maternal Health Care program strive to support AI/AN mothers by fostering safer, more inclusive health care. Together, these efforts aim to reduce maternal mortality by listening to and respecting Indigenous voices, promoting trust between patients and providers, and ensuring that AI/AN mothers receive the attentive, compassionate care they deserve.

We invite all providers interested in Maternal Health Care to visit Think Cultural Health today.

[Visit the Maternal Health Care Program](#)

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.

Follow OMH on Social Media!

