

Think Cultural Health

July 2023 Newsletter

This 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](#).

Practicing Cultural Humility to Advance Health Equity



Practicing cultural humility helps us work towards a healthcare system that prioritizes self-reflection, respect, and collaboration, which can support the provision of equitable care and services to all.

How can I practice cultural humility?

Cultural humility entails approaching others with an open mind and a willingness to learn and committing to continued personal growth.^{[1][2][3]} As a health professional, practicing cultural humility means:^{[4][5][6]}

- Reflecting on your beliefs, values, and limitations
- Recognizing the influence of cultural, social, and historical factors on health beliefs and practices
- Actively listening to, engaging with, and collaborating with patients and clients
- Acknowledging that the patient or client is their own best authority, not you

The fictional scenario below describes a health professional practicing cultural humility.

In a bustling community health clinic, a compassionate nurse named Maya shows her commitment to health equity by practicing cultural humility. She has examined her own values, beliefs, and privileges, and she has taken action to recognize and address her biases. With genuine curiosity, she engages respectfully with each patient to better understand the unique context of their lives. For example, she tries to learn about each patient's sources of support, stressors, perceptions of medicine and healthcare, and health beliefs and behaviors.

Maya's patients appreciate that she values their lived experiences and respects their perspectives. Maya fosters a safe space where patients feel heard and understood, and this helps empower them to participate actively in their healthcare decisions. Maya's dedication to cultural humility cultivates trust and promotes equitable, patient-centered care.

How can practicing cultural humility advance health equity?

Practicing cultural humility helps health professionals create a trusting and respectful relationship with each individual, which can help improve patient-provider communication, patient satisfaction, and quality of care.^[7] By continuously learning, reflecting, and collaborating, we can create a welcoming environment that values diversity, promotes health and well-being, and ultimately advances health equity.

Practicing cultural humility is an ongoing process as we work towards a more equitable healthcare system. Thank you for your dedication to promoting health equity through cultural humility and implementing the National CLAS Standards. Visit Think Cultural Health's [Resource Library](#) for additional resources about cultural humility.

[Visit TCH's Resource Library](#)

^[1]Tervalon, M., & Murray-Garcia, J. (1998). Cultural humility vs cultural competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. *Journal of Healthcare for the Poor and Underserved*, (9)2, 117-125. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hpu.2010.0233>

^[2]Foronda, C., Baptiste, D.-L., Reinholdt, M. M., & Ousman, K. (2016). Cultural humility: A concept analysis. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 27(3), 210-217.

^[3]Greene-Moton, E., & Minkler, M. (2020). Cultural competence or cultural humility? Moving beyond the debate. *Health Promotion Practice*, 21(1), 142-145.

^[4]Hook, J. N., Davis, D., Owen, J., & DeBlaere, C. (2017). *Cultural humility: Engaging diverse identities in therapy*. American Psychological Association.

^[5]Foronda, C., Baptiste, D.-L., Reinholdt, M. M., & Ousman, K. (2016). Cultural humility: A concept analysis. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 27(3), 210-217.

^[6]Greene-Moton, E., & Minkler, M. (2020). Cultural competence or cultural humility? Moving beyond the debate. *Health Promotion Practice*, 21(1), 142-145.

^[7]Foronda C. (2020). A theory of cultural humility. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 31(1), 7-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659619875184>

National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month



July is National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to learn more about the unique challenges that marginalized populations face in receiving effective and respectful behavioral health services. A range of factors – from provider bias to language barriers to structural discrimination – make it more difficult for marginalized populations to access and receive culturally appropriate, high-quality services. Recognizing and understanding these challenges is critical to ensuring all individuals, regardless of their background, have equal access to quality behavioral health care.

Are you a behavioral health professional?

Providing [CLAS](#) is an important strategy for ensuring the delivery of the highest quality services to people from marginalized backgrounds. This National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, commit some time to honing your CLAS skills with [Improving Cultural Competency for Behavioral Health Professionals](#). This is a free, accredited e-learning program from TCH that discusses how cultural factors affect one's behavioral health; how your cultural identity affects your client interactions; and how to better engage, assess, and treat clients from diverse backgrounds. It is accredited for up to 5 hours for counselors, nurses, psychiatrists, and social workers.

You can make a difference by understanding, respecting, and responding to a client's experiences, values, and beliefs. By tailoring your services to each client's unique context, you can better meet their needs and improve their outcomes.

Cultural humility in behavioral health

Learning to provide CLAS and practice cultural humility is a lifelong and often challenging process. Getting to know your own beliefs and biases – and learning to consider and prioritize those of your clients – can feel uncomfortable. In fact, this discomfort is a good sign that you are learning and growing.

Check out [Improving Cultural Competency for Behavioral Health Professionals](#) to take the next step toward providing equitable, high quality services.

[Visit TCH's Behavioral Health Program](#)

National CLAS Standards: Building Bridges to Equity in Healthcare



The [National CLAS Standards](#) provide health care organizations with a set of action steps for providing CLAS and helping to advance health equity, improve quality, and eliminate health care disparities. They offer a framework for infusing CLAS activities into policies and practices across the organization. This helps organizations bridge the cultural and communication gaps that often impede the delivery of high-quality services.

Here are three key ways the National CLAS Standards can help organizations build bridges to equity.

Improving Communication

Consider the fictional story of Tracey, a recent immigrant. Language barriers often pose a significant challenge for people like Tracey when seeking healthcare. However, an organization that implements the National CLAS Standards has policies and practices in place that ensure effective communication. For example, engaging with the community and collecting demographic data will inform the provision of language assistance services – such as offering certified interpreters and plain language materials – in the languages commonly spoken in the service area, and training providers will ensure these services are utilized effectively. These steps help make sure Tracey's and other patients' voices are heard and understood.

Providing Respectful Care

Tracey's cultural background, values, and life experiences influence her health beliefs, communication style, and treatment preferences. Healthcare professionals committed to CLAS take the time to elicit this information and tailor their approach accordingly. Listening to and respecting a patient's values and needs can improve the experiences and outcomes of marginalized individuals like Tracey. An organization that implements the National CLAS Standards recruits, promotes, and supports clinicians that prioritize the provision of respectful care.

Embracing Diversity

Tracey appreciates seeing providers and staff who look like her or speak her language. The National CLAS Standards emphasize the importance of a diverse governance, leadership, and workforce that is responsive to the cultural and communication needs of the populations served. A diverse workforce can increase culturally competent care and patient engagement. By providing CLAS, healthcare leaders and professionals can cultivate an environment where diversity is celebrated, and each patient's unique context is acknowledged and understood.

A Call to Action

[Think Cultural Health](#) encourages healthcare leaders and professionals to embrace the National CLAS Standards as a framework for improving communication, providing respectful care, and embracing diversity. Let us work together to build bridges to equity in healthcare and make sure that no one is left behind.

For more information, resources, and training opportunities on CLAS, please visit www.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov. Together, let's pave the way to a more equitable and inclusive healthcare system.

[Visit Think Cultural Health](#)

TCH Health Equity Timeline

Did you know TCH houses a Health Equity Timeline? It highlights key milestones and activities in health equity in the U.S. over the past forty years, from the 1985 Heckler Report and the 1986 establishment of the Office of Minority Health to the publication of the National CLAS Standards to national regulations related to language access, and much more. The timeline was updated in July 2023 with the latest developments in the field.

[Visit TCH's Health Equity Timeline](#)

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.