

# Think Cultural Health

June 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](#).

## CLAS Spotlight on Guam



*The participants of a CLAS training in Guam on April 27, 2024.*

May was Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, and we would like to take the opportunity to celebrate Guam's efforts to promote health equity and CLAS. Guam is the largest and southernmost island in the Mariana Islands archipelago, located in the western North Pacific Ocean. It is a multicultural island with more than half of its 153,836 residents identifying as Pacific Islander (54%). Four in 10 residents (41%) identify as Chamorro. Over half (57%) of Guamanians speak a language other than English at home.<sup>[1]</sup>

Guam's Office of Minority Health and other agencies have adopted the National CLAS Standards. Many activities focus on training the workforce to deliver high quality, culturally responsive health and human services across the island.

A Guam CLAS Training is required for health professionals needing licensure under the Government of Guam Health Professional Licensing Office. The Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services offers the training free of charge, including all materials and resources. The training has evolved to be a uniquely relevant and localized tool to improve the delivery of professional health and wellness services in Guam. Random post-training surveys show 88% of respondents reporting "Significant Improvement" in the outcomes of their service delivery and that 98% of respondents would recommend the training to other service professionals. Alex Silverio, Program Coordinator for the Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services, said, "It is a privilege to witness improved service delivery as a result of the Guam CLAS Training. It is especially good to see the increased quality of lives in our highly diverse population, especially among the under-served and under-represented people as a result of the Guam CLAS Training."

Here are a few more highlights of Guam's CLAS initiatives:

- Guam requires CLAS training for:
  - [Social workers](#) seeking license renewals to complete at least four education hours addressing cultural competency, specific to the diverse population of Guam, as part of their continuing education.
  - [EMT participants](#) in the Community Paramedic Outreach Program to attend a CLAS training conducted by the Guam Office of Minority Health prior to initiation of outreach services.
  - [Peace Officers](#) to complete training in cultural awareness and sensitivity.
- The [Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center](#) fosters a climate of respect and inclusion by promoting cultural humility, employing a diverse workforce, offering CLAS trainings, and tailoring prevention interventions to the cultural and communication characteristics of vulnerable populations.
- [Executive Order No. 2015-015](#) requires all Guam government agencies to develop and implement a language access plan.

This commitment to CLAS training equips Guam's health and human services workforce to deliver culturally respectful services. Mr. Silverio notes, "I've discovered that the pursuit of effective cultural competency begins with us. We must align our lives towards improvement and enrichment first, then take the steps to be culturally competent. We cannot be truly effective in providing the best in service delivery and cultural competency for those we serve if our own lives are in disarray. Our patients sense this, as some of them have told us. When we focus on improving ourselves, we are much stronger and effective in helping others."

For free continuing education programs for health professionals, visit Think Cultural Health.

[Visit TCH's Education Programs](#)

<sup>[1]</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2024, June 14). 2020: Decennial Census of Island Areas: Guam Demographic Profile. <https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALDPGU2020.DP1?f=040XX00US6&d=DECIA%20Guam%20Demographic%20Profile&tid=DECENNIALDPGU2020.DP1>

## HHS Issues New Rule Advancing Equity in Health Care



The HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) have issued a final rule under Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that advances protections against discrimination in health care. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in any health program or activity that receives federal financial assistance, State-based Health Insurance Exchanges, and HHS health programs and activities.

The rule is one of the government's most powerful tools to ensure nondiscriminatory access to health care for all, regardless of age, including women, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, people with limited English proficiency (LEP), and people of color. Among other things, the rule:

- Requires covered health care providers, insurers, grantees, and others, to proactively let people know that language assistance services and accessibility services are available at no cost to patients.
- Clarifies that covered health programs and activities offered via telehealth must also be accessible to individuals with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities.
- Protects against discrimination by codifying that Section 1557's prohibition against discrimination based on sex includes LGBTQI+ patients.
- Respects federal protections for religious freedom and conscience and makes clear that recipients may simply rely on those protections or seek assurance of them from HHS.
- Respects the clinical judgement of health care providers.

All people deserve health care that is safe, culturally competent, and free from discrimination. Learn more about Section 1557 of the ACA at [HHS.gov/1557](https://www.hhs.gov/1557), and check out TCH's Communication Guide for insights about providing language access.

[Visit TCH's Communication Guide](#)

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



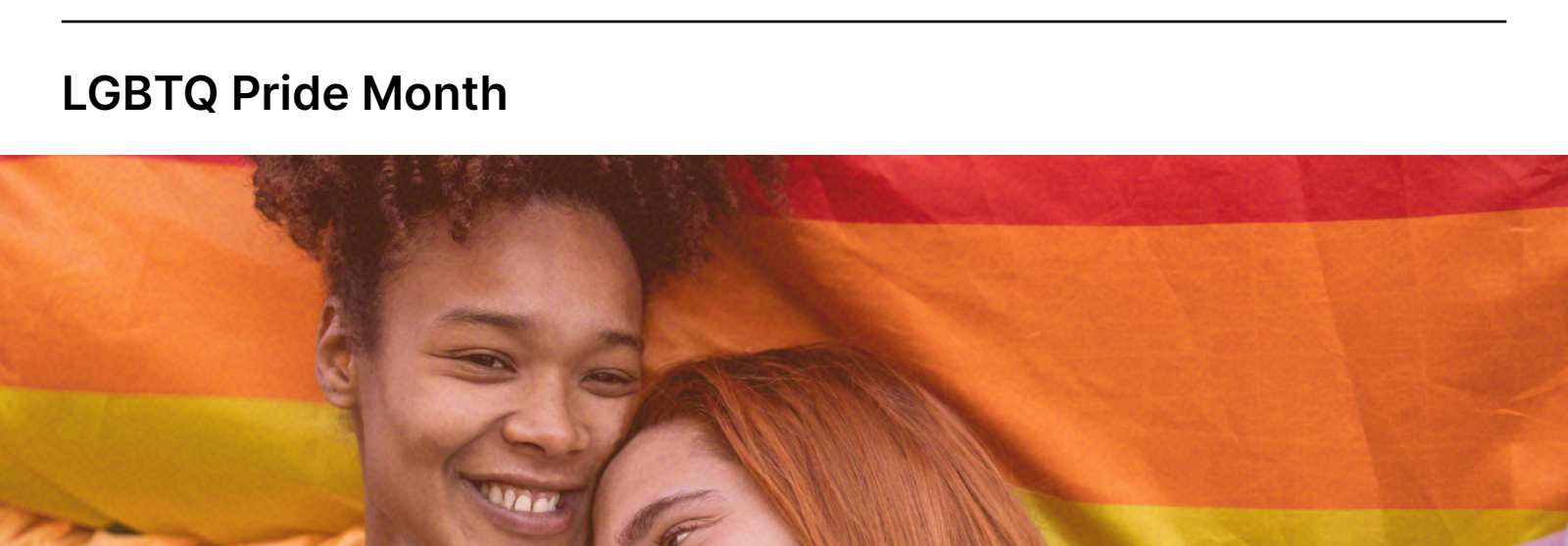
Think Cultural Health's newest e-learning program, [CLAS in Nursing](#), is making a big splash! Since its launch this spring, more than 14,200 nursing professionals and students have completed one or more of the four available courses. CLAS in Nursing equips nurses to deliver equitable, respectful, and patient-centered care. It covers 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. So far, we have awarded 6,500 free credits to nursing professionals who are committed to improving patient experiences and outcomes through CLAS. Eight out of 10 learners rate the program "excellent" or "very good," and agree "the program is an effective tool to increase knowledge of cultural competency and cultural humility."

We invite all nurses and nursing students to join us in our mission to advance health equity through the provision of CLAS. Understanding, respecting, and responding to patients' needs and preferences helps nurses ensure the highest quality of care to all patients.

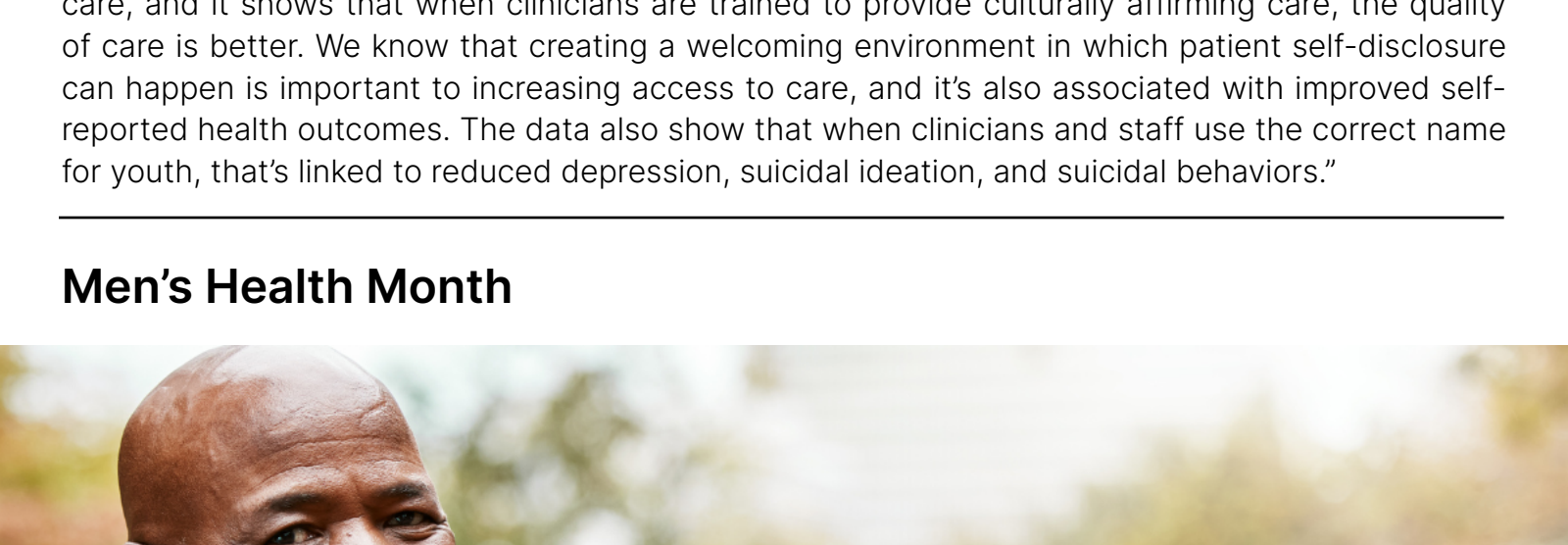
[Enroll in the TCH Nurses Program](#)

## LGBTQ Pride Month



June is LGBTQ Pride Month, dedicated to celebrating and honoring lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer pride. Pride Month offers an opportunity to commit to improving quality of care for LGBTQI+ people and their families, and data collection is a critical strategy for doing so. Jennifer Potter, MD, Co-Chair of the Fenway Institute and Director of the LGBT Population Health in care, and it shows that when clinicians are trained to provide culturally affirming care, the quality of care is better. We know that creating a welcoming environment in which patient self-disclosure can happen is important to increasing access to care, and it's also associated with improved self-reported health outcomes. The data also show that when clinicians and staff use the correct name for youth, that's linked to reduced depression, suicidal ideation, and suicidal behaviors."

## Men's Health Month



In June, we also celebrate Men's Health Month, an opportunity to remind men about the health issues they face and encourage them to be proactive in their overall health by implementing healthy living decisions. Men face unique health challenges that do not affect women, such as prostate cancer, and racial and ethnic minority men often contend with intersecting discriminatory factors that can impact their health outcomes.

Join us in combatting health disparities by fostering a healthcare environment that recognizes and addresses the importance of cultural competence and humility. Together, we can improve health equity and offer every man the healthy future he deserves. Learn more about OMH's Men's Health Month initiatives at <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/mens-health-month-2024>.

## 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.