

# Think Cultural Health

September 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](#).

## Cultural Navigators for Latino Patients



Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity to recognize both the rich cultures of Hispanic/Latino communities across the country and the innovative ways health systems can deliver high-quality, respectful services to Hispanic/Latino patients. In the Seattle, Washington area, [Providence Swedish](#), a nonprofit healthcare provider, has pioneered [a cultural navigator program](#) to bridge cultural, language, and access gaps between its services and its communities, including Hispanic/Latino and other communities.

Cultural navigators are frontline public health workers who are bilingual and bicultural. They help patients navigate the healthcare system, understand medical information, and access health and social services. Jesus Elizalde-Lindgren, Director of Health Equity at Providence Swedish, explains: "Look like me, sound like me, understand me – These are all components that are important to the services we provide."

The cultural navigators at Providence Swedish build patients' health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy. They travel to community events to offer health screenings, give out blood pressure cuffs, and share information about high blood pressure. They also partner with Providence Swedish's mammography vans to offer mammograms and other screenings. [In 2023](#), cultural navigators served nearly 1,000 patients, co-hosted five mobile mammogram events, and attended more than 35 community events.

[Silvia Kennedy](#), supervisor of the Cultural Navigation Program, explains, "Cultural navigators don't only remove barriers such as language and transportation. They develop meaningful relationships with community leaders, community organizations, faith institutions, agencies, and more with the intention to create opportunities, reestablish trust, and build healthy communities." Silvia shared one of her experiences working as a cultural navigator:

I called a Spanish-speaking 62-year-old woman from Mexico to go over her Financial Assistance application. She answered in tears. I gave her a moment to cry on the phone until she was able to talk. She asked to speak with me in person. The next day, I met her at a coffee shop near her home. She started to cry. I could see the pain in her eyes. I grabbed her hands and let her know that was okay to cry.

After a few minutes, she shared with me that her son had been deported a few days before. She was worried about his safety and about supporting financially him in Mexico while her family was struggling financially here.

How can you ask a mom to go over the Financial Assistance application and schedule her next pap smear and mammogram screening while she is worried about her family's future and being separated from her son? I helped connect her family to a local non-profit legal services organization, where a lawyer helped them understand their options.

After some time focusing on her son's situation, she is now continuing her care at the family clinic, and she has joined a support group that she really enjoys.

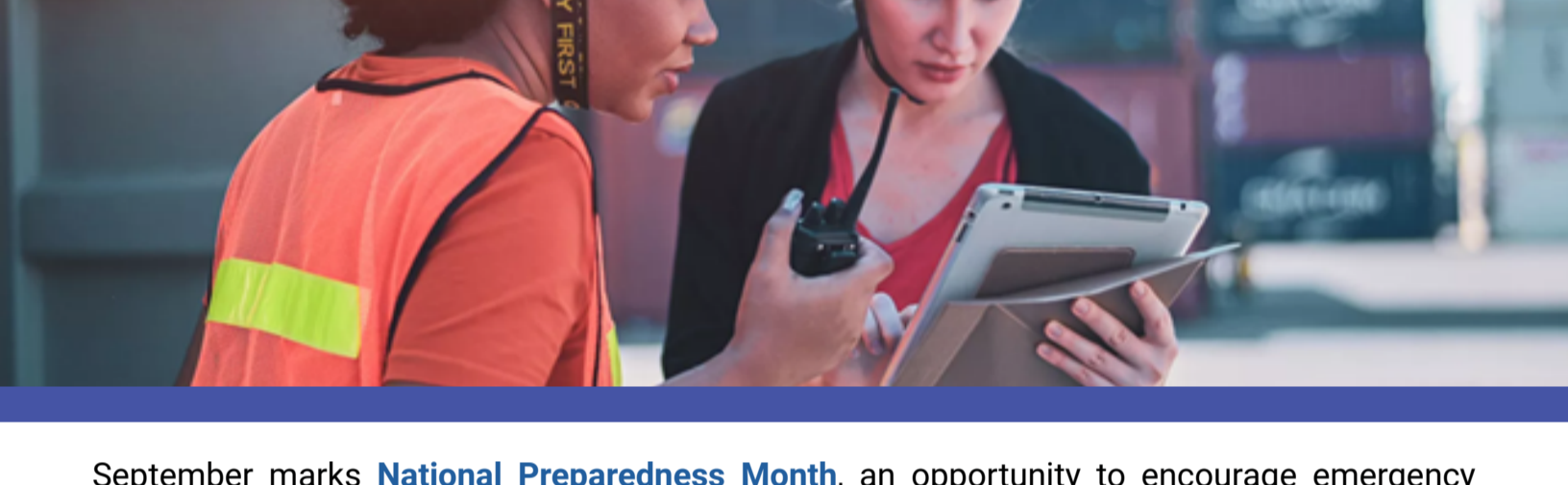
This experience highlights the critical role of cultural navigators in building trusting relationships with the communities they serve. Silvia continues, "I am committed to ensuring that historically underserved families don't lose hope. Challenges such as distance, language, and discrimination shouldn't determine health and well-being. I want to help show people a window of opportunity."

Let's celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month not just in words but also in action. Organizations can further deliver CLAS to Hispanic/Latino communities by employing bilingual and bicultural providers, including community health workers; improving language access; and establishing community partnerships. Professionals can deliver culturally tailored services to Hispanic/Latino patients by learning how to understand patients' circumstances and priorities, actively listening to their concerns and questions, and incorporating cultural values and practices into care plans.

Visit [Think Cultural Health](#) to learn more about understanding and responding to the unique environments, cultures, histories, and circumstances of each patient. Think Cultural Health offers [a free e-learning program for promotores de salud and community health workers](#) about how to support community members in making healthy choices.

[Visit the Promotores de Salud Program](#)

## TCH Guides for Emergency Management Professionals



September marks [National Preparedness Month](#), an opportunity to encourage emergency preparedness in all communities to ensure no one is left behind when disaster strikes. Disasters and emergencies can disproportionately impact certain populations, including racial and ethnic minorities, tribal populations, people with limited English proficiency, rural communities, low-income communities, individuals with disabilities, seniors, and children. Understanding and respecting everyone's unique context and needs helps you provide the best possible services to that person.

If you work in disaster response and emergency management, check out two Think Cultural Health toolkits with guidance for including all community members in emergency preparation, response, and recovery efforts.

[Ensuring Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Crisis Communication](#) presents actionable steps to ensure your messages are clear, trustworthy, and accessible to all communities. From identifying key demographic groups to engaging trusted local messengers and creating multilingual materials, this guide equips you with essential strategies to effectively communicate during emergencies.

[Engaging Community Partners to Support Equitable Crisis Response and Recovery](#) provides strategies for building trust, fostering partnerships, and ensuring inclusive and culturally and linguistically appropriate emergency services. Learn to identify community leaders, engage underserved populations, and develop a community-driven recovery plan.

The [Resource Library](#) on the Think Cultural Health website offers a comprehensive collection of materials, including guides, toolkits, and training resources, to support the delivery of culturally and linguistically appropriate services. [Check it out today!](#)

[Visit TCH's Resource Library](#)

## OMH Supports Meaningful Access through New Language Access Plan



The HHS Office of Minority Health (OMH) is committed to supporting meaningful access to its programs and to building capacity among health organizations to enhance the availability and quality of language access services.

OMH recently released its [Language Access Plan \(LAP\)](#), outlining strategies to advance language access in our policies, programs, and operations. The OMH LAP solidifies our commitment to promoting meaningful access to resources for persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) and individuals with disabilities. [The OMH LAP is available in nine languages](#) (English, Spanish, Chinese (simplified and traditional), Korean, Tagalog, Vietnamese, French, and Arabic).

The OMH LAP outlines five areas in which OMH will promote meaningful language access and engagement for individuals and organizations that use its resources:

1. Enhancing awareness and promotion of the [National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services \(CLAS\) in Health and Health Care](#).
2. Increasing use of translation and interpretation services.
3. Improving language accessibility to OMH resources and convenings.
4. Researching, developing, and testing methods of informing individuals with LEP about the availability of language assistance services.
5. Continuing OMH engagement in HHS language access efforts, including serving on the HHS Language Access Steering Committee.

To learn more, read OMH's Blog for Health Equity post titled ["Language Access: A Source for Better Health"](#) and the [2023 HHS Language Access Plan](#).

[Visit OMH's Language Access Page](#)

## CLAS for Maternal Health Providers



Did you know Think Cultural Health offers a free e-learning program for maternal health providers? Physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, nurses, certified nurse midwives, and certified midwives can earn up to two continuing education credits.

Eight in 10 learners say the course is an effective way to learn about cultural competency and cultural humility strategies for delivering the highest quality of care to all birthing people. Here's what some learners are saying.

- "This was an excellent course. All healthcare professionals should take it."
- "The course is very relevant, comprehensive, and well organized."
- "I really like the case studies. I think they are a great learning tool. I also loved the resources. I will go back to the resources many times after the course is done."

Register for the maternal health program today to learn how to improve quality of care to birthing people by understanding, respecting, and responding to their experiences, values, and beliefs.

[Learn More About TCH's Maternal Health 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!

