

Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS)

What, Why and How

What is CLAS? Services that are respectful and responsive to each person’s culture and communication needs.

Why is CLAS Important? CLAS helps you take into account cultural health beliefs, preferred languages, health literacy levels and communication needs. CLAS also helps make your services respectful, understandable, effective, and equitable.

CLAS helps advance health equity to ensure that every person can “attain his or her full health potential” and no one is “disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or other socially determined circumstances.”

While many factors impact health equity, providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services can be effective at improving healthcare quality and outcomes.

What are the National CLAS Standards? The HHS Office of Minority Health (OMH) published National CLAS Standards in 2000 and updated in 2013 to advance health equity and improve quality of care.

The CLAS Standards provide health care organizations with 15 actionable steps for providing appropriate services.

What is CLAS’s Impact on Patient Care? Culture plays an important role in health beliefs, behaviors, and practices as well as

communication styles and treatment adherence. Language is central to communication, which is essential to patient care and safety.

Approximately 20 percent of people in the United States speak a language other than English, and a significant proportion of this population has limited English proficiency (LEP).

These patients face many disparities in care, including:

- Longer hospital stays
- Greater risk of surgical infections, falls, pressure ulcers, and
- Greater chance of readmissions

Cultural competence can lead to improved patient communication, patient safety, fewer healthcare disparities and decreased costs.

How Can We Get Started on Implementing CLAS? Complete this [CLAS Assessment](#) (which follows the OMH format) to understand where your organization is with its implementation of the National CLAS Standards.

Use the CLAS Assessment as a tool to help you and your team develop an action plan on how best to improve CLAS implementation. Contact the [GPQIN Team](#) for resources and assistance on moving forward.

Resources on CLAS can also be found on our [Health Equity webpage](#).