

# CLAS Standards Toolkit

Office of Health  
Equity

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**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

## Message from the Director of the Office of Health Equity

Amid an ever-changing political landscape, health disparities persist throughout Pennsylvania and the nation. For many years, residents in rural and urban areas across the [state Commonwealth](#) have been dying prematurely and living with a poor quality of life due to social, economic and environmental factors (social determinants of health).

[The State of Health Equity in Pennsylvania Report in 2019](#) revealed the ways in which a myriad of factors contributes to the superior health outcomes of some communities and poor health outcomes suffered by others. The mechanisms through which housing, education, transportation, poverty and recreation influence health were examined. Based on the findings in this report, it became evident that Pennsylvania needs to take action now to address these inequities in our environments, and one way of doing so is to make sure our health services are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

As noted in the report, people who experience discrimination [and implicit bias](#) in the health care setting are less likely to seek medical help when necessary or follow provider recommendations on lifestyle changes, medications or follow-up appointments<sup>i</sup>. Additionally, many studies about perceptions of racial and ethnic discrimination have shown associations with poor physical and mental health status.<sup>ii</sup> In one study, those who spoke a language other than English, in particular, were more likely to report discrimination, regardless of race or ethnicity.

This toolkit is intended to be a clarion call to those who aspire for Pennsylvania to be something to be proud of; a state in which everyone has the same right and opportunity to achieve the highest level of health and quality of life. Increasing health equity and reducing health disparities will not be easy, but nothing worthwhile and lasting ever is. We hope this toolkit will be a resource and catalyst for change, dialogue and most of all action.

With much appreciation to everyone who helped make this toolkit a reality!

**David Saunders**  
**[Director, Office of Health Equity](#)**

# Introduction

## BACKGROUND

The National [CLAS Standards](#) are intended to advance health equity, improve quality, and help eliminate health care disparities by providing a blueprint for individuals, health and health care organizations to implement culturally and linguistically appropriate services.<sup>28</sup> These standards help take into account cultural health beliefs, preferred languages, health literacy levels, and communication needs, all while making your services more respectful, understandable, effective and equitable., health and health care organizations to implement culturally and linguistically appropriate services.<sup>29</sup> These standards help take into account cultural health beliefs, preferred languages, health literacy levels, and communication needs, all while making your services more respectful, understandable, effective and equitable.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this toolkit is to enable organizations to provide resources to implement the National CLAS Standards and improve health equity. This toolkit was originally developed for internal use in the Fall 2018 to advance the National CLAS Standards initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH). Since then, there have been a variety of updates to keep up with the changing times. The Office of Health Equity was charged with increasing awareness of CLAS Standards within the commonwealth, and this toolkit is one of several ways that the office and DOH are ensuring Pennsylvania stays at the forefront of health equity across the state. This toolkit is designed to support individuals who work in organizations, both specific to healthcare and not, who wish to implement the National CLAS Standards within their programs and initiatives. Aims to strengthen health professionals and organizations by providing information on how to implement specific standards within the scope of your role or grade level.

## INTENDED AUDIENCE

This toolkit can be used in a variety of public health settings and was created by the [Office of Health Equity \(OHE\)](#) within DOH. All members of the health and health care community can benefit from the framework offered by the CLAS Standards. The following is a partial list of audiences of the CLAS Standards and how each type of audience might utilize them.<sup>31</sup>

- **Accreditation and Credentialing Agencies:** to assess and compare health care facilities, health and human service organizations, and providers who offer culturally and linguistically appropriate services and ensure quality for diverse populations. Institutions such as The Joint Commission and the National Committee for Quality Assurance have made great strides in implementing policies and standards to help ensure these quality services.
- **Community-Based Organizations:** to promote quality health care for diverse populations and to assess and monitor care and services being delivered. The potential

advocate audience is broad and includes legal services, consumer education agencies, faith-based organizations, and other local, regional, or national nonprofit organizations that address health and health care issues.

- **Educators:** to incorporate cultural and linguistic competency into their curricula and to raise awareness about the impact of culture and language on health and health care services. This audience would include educators from academic institutions, state health professional licensing agencies, and educators from legal and social service professions.
- **Governance and Leadership:** to draft consistent and comprehensive laws, regulations, and contract language. This audience would include federal, state, tribal, and local governments. The audience would also include the individuals within organizations who are responsible for developing regulations and contracts, as well as the leadership responsible for decision making regarding regulations and contracts.
- **Health Care and Service Providers:** to incorporate cultural and linguistic competency into the delivery of quality health care and services. This audience would include clinicians, practitioners, and service delivery organizations across health and allied health disciplines, including behavioral health.
- **Health and Health Care Staff and Administrators:** to implement culturally and linguistically appropriate services throughout an organization, at every point of contact. This audience would include employees, contractors, and volunteers serving throughout the organization.
- **Patients/Consumers:** to understand their right to receive accessible and appropriate health and health care services and to evaluate whether providers can offer them.
- **Public Health Workforce:** to implement cultural and linguistic competency into the provision of public health services. This audience would include those involved in the behavioral health, emergency medical services, environmental health, epidemiology, and global health.
- **Purchasers:** to promote the needs of diverse consumers of health benefits, and leverage responses from insurers and health plans.<sup>32</sup> This audience would include government and employer purchasers of health benefits.

## STATEMENT ON RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

When creating this CLAS toolkit, it became overwhelmingly apparent that racism, both implicit and explicit, affects health services in multiple, intersecting ways. Pennsylvania Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine addressed this issue [years ago](#) stating that, “In Pennsylvania, health disparities exist in many different areas including chronic disease rates, infant and maternal mortality, and rates of sexually transmitted infections with Black/African Americans bearing a disproportionate burden of negative health outcomes<sup>31</sup>. These health disparities are not the result of individual behavior, but rather the consequence of structural racism and systems of oppression that create unequal distribution of resources and determine whether someone is able to achieve their highest level of health.”

Institutions, policies, and societal systems that oppress people of color are collectively referred to as systemic racism. [Black and Indigenous People of Color \(BIPOC\)](#) are still impacted by the laws that were put in place centuries ago by the European colonizers. In addition to causing socioeconomic deprivation, systemic racism has a negative impact on the mental health of oppressed communities.<sup>1</sup>

However, non-BIPOC or white people may be indirectly harmed or burdened by the effects of the legacy of racist policies and structures, like

segregation. Racism and discrimination, like that perpetuated by segregation, prevent us from experiencing the breadth of diversity that exists within our larger communities and denies those facing oppression of their human rights, to be treated and respected as human. But this does not have to continue. To build a healthy Pennsylvania for all, the vision of our department, we must care about one another enough to continuously educate and hold ourselves accountable, even if we are not the ones directly harmed by these structures. In accordance with this notion, the Office of Health Equity has decided to include a number of resources related to racism as a public health issue in this toolkit. Understanding the experiences that BIPOC go through and the traumatic effects that racism can have on a person's health are key components of becoming more culturally appropriate, competent, and humble. This toolkit is a great place to start.



## **STANDING TOGETHER AGAINST RACISM**

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on how BIPOC have disproportionate health outcomes due to structural racism and systems of oppression, visit the Nittle, N. (2023, February 6). [How does systemic racism affect mental health?](#)

## CLAS TOOLKIT FAQ

### How to Use this Toolkit?

→ This toolkit offers resources to incorporate the federal CLAS principles and practices into all aspects of organizational activities. The CLAS standards are categorized into four sections, Click on each area to learn how to incorporate the following CLAS categories within the scope of your work: Principle Standard; Governance, Leadership, and Workforce; Communication and Language Assistance; and Engagement, Continuous Improvement, and Accountability.

→ These resources will help to implement policies and fully equip staff to follow the standards. Different ways of implementing CLAS Standards include training staff, recruiting a representative workforce, creating, and supporting a designated CLAS position or offering comprehensive language assistance.

### Why Should your Organization Implement these Standards?

→ It's the Law:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits any program receiving federal financial assistance from discriminating on the basis of race, color or national origin (now also interpreted to include discrimination on the basis of limited English proficiency).<sup>2</sup>
  - Includes organizations that receive funds from Medicaid and Medicare programs.

- Protect your organization from liability.

→ Improve Service to Clients and Stakeholders:

- Increase client/stakeholder satisfaction.
- Create an open line of communication with clients/stakeholders.
- Improve client/stakeholder understanding and consent of health-related topics.

→ Improve Overall Business:

- Better allocate funds due to improved data collection.
- Improve effectiveness of treatment plans for clients/stakeholders.

→ Reduce overall health disparities in PA.

## **CLAS Standards:<sup>10</sup>**

### **Principal Standard:**

1. Provide effective, equitable, understandable, and respectful quality care and services that are responsive to diverse cultural health beliefs and practices, preferred languages, health literacy, and other communication needs.

### **Governance, Leadership and Workforce:**

2. Advance and sustain organizational governance and leadership that promotes CLAS and health equity through policy, practices and allocated resources.
3. Recruit, promote, and support a culturally and linguistically diverse governance, leadership, and workforce that are responsive to the population in the service area.
4. Educate and train governance, leadership, and workforce in culturally and linguistically appropriate policies and practices on an ongoing basis.

### **Communication and Language Assistance:**

5. Offer language assistance to individuals who have limited English proficiency and/or other communication needs, at no cost to them, to facilitate timely access to all health care and services.
6. Inform all individuals of the availability of language assistance services clearly and in their preferred language, verbally and in writing.
7. Ensure the competence of individuals providing language assistance services, recognizing that the use of untrained individuals and/or minors as interpreters should be avoided.
8. Provide easy-to-read print and multimedia materials and signage in the languages commonly used by the populations in the service area.

### **Engagement, Continuous Improvement, and Accountability:**

9. Establish culturally and linguistically appropriate goals, policies, and management accountability, and infuse them throughout the organization's planning and operations.
10. Conduct ongoing assessments of the organization's CLAS-related activities and integrate CLAS-related measures into measurement and continuous quality improvement activities.
11. Collect and maintain accurate and reliable demographic data to monitor and evaluate the impact of CLAS on health equity and outcomes and to inform service delivery.
12. Conduct regular assessments of community health assets and needs and use the results to plan and implement services that respond to the cultural and linguistic diversity of populations in the service area.
13. Partner with the community to design, implement, and evaluate policies, practices, and services to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness.
14. Create conflict and grievance resolution processes that are culturally and linguistically appropriate to identify, prevent and resolve conflicts or complaints.
15. Communicate the organization's progress in implementing and sustaining CLAS to all stakeholders, constituents, and the general public.

## PRINCIPLE STANDARD

### CLAS STANDARD:

1. Provide effective, equitable, understandable and respectful quality care and services that are responsive to diverse cultural health beliefs and practices, preferred languages, health literacy and other communication needs.

### Ways to use these resources to advance the standards:

- Use these resources as a baseline of training; at a minimum staff should be familiar with these topics.

Topic	Description	Links
Improving Cultural Competency for Behavioral Health Professionals	From the Office of Minority Health, the Think Cultural Health E Learning Program is intended to help behavioral health professionals (including social workers) increase their cultural and linguistic competency. Cultural and linguistic competency is recognized as an important strategy for improving the quality of care provided to clients from diverse backgrounds.	<a href="#"><u>Think Cultural Health</u></a>
LGBTQ and HIV/AIDS Communities Awareness and Sensitivity	The mission of the Persad Center is to improve the well-being of LGBTQ communities.	<a href="#"><u>LGBTQ Awareness and Sensitivity</u></a>



People with Disabilities	Leading Healthcare Practices & Training: Defining & Delivering Disability Competent Care (Webinar)	<a href="#"><u>Disability-Competent Care — What Is It And Why Is It Important?</u></a>
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Links</b>
Racism as a Public Health Issue	This kick-off webinar of APHA's Advancing Racial Equity series examined racism and its historic and present-day impact on health and well-being	<a href="#"><u>Racism: The Ultimate Underlying Condition</u></a>
Sexual and Gender Minorities	Glossary of terms to use and not to use when talking with and about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Queer individuals. <sup>1</sup>	<a href="#"><u>GLAAD LGBTQ References</u></a>
Sexual and Gender Minorities	Glossary of terms to use and not to use when talking with and about Transgender individuals. <sup>1i</sup>	<a href="#"><u>GLAAD Transgender Reference</u></a>
Sexual and Reproductive Health	Access Matters works to innovate, empower, and equalize access to sexual and reproductive health care for teens and adults in need.	<a href="#"><u>Training Catalog</u></a>
Stratis Health: Culture, Care, Connection - Culture care connection	This Minnesota Web site is an online learning and resource center dedicated to supporting Minnesota's health care organizations in their efforts to provide culturally competent care. The site provides	<a href="#"><u>Culture Care Connection</u></a>

	resources to help organizations meet the Office of Minority Health’s national standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS), including information on cultural competence concepts, health topics, ethnicities, stakeholder organizations, and resources that reflect the needs of Minnesota’s diverse populations.	
TRAIN PA: Cultural Competence	External trainings developed by Pennsylvania’s DOH group. There are five cultural competence trainings, lasting one hour each. (Search for “PA-DOH: Cross-Cultural Communication”)	<u>TRAIN PA</u>

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Links</b>
CLAS Standards Training	Washington state and Massachusetts provided free online trainings that focuses on cultural competency, diversity, and health equity, and provides an overview of the National CLAS Standards. <sup>25</sup>	<u>CLAS Standards Training and Resources</u>  <u>Making CLAS Happen: Six Areas for Action</u>

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Links</b>
Health Literacy	The AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit, second edition, can help primary care practices reduce the complexity of health care, increase patient understanding of health information, and enhance support for patients of all health literacy levels. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit</u></a>
Improving Cultural Competency for Behavioral Health Professionals	From the Office of Minority Health, the Think Cultural Health E-Learning Program is intended to help behavioral health professionals (including social workers) increase their cultural and linguistic competency. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>Improving Cultural Competency</u></a>
People with Disabilities	This series is intended for interested providers and health care professionals, front-line staff with health plans and provider practices, and other stakeholders. It introduces and explores the many uses of the Disability-Competent Care (DCC) model. The DCC model is a resource for providers, health plans, and healthcare organizations to enhance capacity to integrate care for adults with disabilities. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>Disability-Competent Care Webinar Series</u></a>
Serving Diverse Communities in the Workplace	Participants will learn about some of the current critiques to using cultural competence principles and how cultural humility can be supplemented to create a more accepting,	<a href="#"><u>Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Deployment Refresher - Think Cultural Health (hhs.gov)</u></a>

Topic	Description	Links
	welcoming, and reflective working environment. <sup>25</sup>	
Sexual and Gender Minorities	Glossary of terms to use and not to use when talking with and about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Queer individuals. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#">GLAAD LGBTQ References</a>
Sexual and Gender Minorities	Glossary of terms to use and not to use when talking with and about Transgender individuals. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#">GLAAD Transgender Reference</a>

## COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE

### Does your organization...

- Provide training in CLAS delivery to members at all levels and disciplines?
- Provide timely professional interpreter services, at no cost, to all LEP clients, including those who use ASL?
- Offer all LEP or deaf/hard of hearing clients verbal and written notices about their right to language assistance services?
- Provide deaf/hard of hearing clients and clients with disabilities a copy of your bureau or office's disability access notice?
- Offer written materials in languages that target the diverse cultural groups in your service area/population?
- Clearly display images or post signage visibly that shows inclusivity for the diverse cultural groups including LGBTQ and people with disabilities in your service area/population?

### CLAS STANDARDS:

1. Offer language assistance to individuals who have limited English proficiency and/or other communication needs, at no cost to them, to facilitate timely access to all health care and services.
2. Inform all individuals of the availability of language assistance services clearly and in the preferred language, verbally and in writing.
3. Ensure the competence of individuals providing language assistance, recognizing that the use of untrained individuals and/or minors as interpreters should be avoided.
4. Provide easy-to-understand print and multimedia materials and signage in the languages commonly used by the populations in the service area.

**Ways to use these resources to advance the standards:**

- Offer comprehensive language assistance services.
- Require interpreters' skills to be certified or assessed.
- Use advanced technology for interpretation services.

Topic	Description	Links
American Community Survey	The U.S. Census Bureau released in 2021 as part of their American Community Survey data information on "languages spoken at home" and "ability to speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over" for the U.S. as a whole. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>Census</u></a>
Health Literacy	Online trainings developed by the PA Health Literacy Coalition. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>Health Literacy</u></a>
Health Literacy and Public Health	This training introduces the concept of health literacy, provides strategies for considering literacy when creating public health messages for the general public and provides strategies for considering literacy in direct public health services to the public. <sup>25</sup>	<a href="#"><u>Health Literacy &amp; Public Health: Introduction (Part 1)</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Strategies for Addressing Low Health Literacy (Part 2)</u></a>
Health Literacy Training for Physicians, Nurses, and Health Care Extenders	This course, and associated materials, assists physicians, nurses, and health care extenders obtain relevant information for improving knowledge, skills and attitudes in health literacy in their chosen field. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>Health Literacy</u></a>

<p>Health Literacy Training for Public Health Professionals</p>	<p>The Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals (Core Competencies) are a consensus set of skills for the broad practice of public health, as defined by the 10 Essential Public Health Services. Developed by the Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice (Council on Linkages), the Core Competencies reflect foundational skills desirable for professionals engaging in the practice,</p>	<p><u>Health Literacy Course</u> (Login/Create an Account for TRAIN PA and then search for ‘Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals’ - course is: <u>Guiding Workforce Development: The Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals</u>)</p>
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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English For the Population 5 Years and Older. *American Community Survey*. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=Language+Spoken+at+Home&g=040XX00US42&tid=ACSDT1Y2021.B16001>

<sup>2</sup>Communicating to Connect. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://jeffline.jefferson.edu/PAHLC/>

<sup>3</sup>Health Literacy & Public Health: Introduction. Public Health Training Courses Online. Published March 30, 2021. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://phtc-online.org/learning/?courseId=16>

<sup>4</sup>Health Literacy & Public Health: Strategies for Addressing Low Health Literacy. Public Health Training Courses Online. Published March 30, 2021. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://phtc-online.org/learning/?courseId=17>

<sup>5</sup>Health Literacy for Public Health Professionals Resources. Health Literacy. Published March 21, 2022. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/healthliteracyresources/index.html#Training%20Programs>

<sup>6</sup>Guiding Workforce Development: The Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals. TRAIN PA. Published November 19, 2021. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://www.train.org/pa/course/1100292/details?activeTab=about>

Topic	Description	Links
	education, and research of public health. <sup>24</sup>	
Immigrants and Refugees	International Institute of Minnesota is a social service organization that serves people in transition and promotes the welfare of all nationalities and races. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>International Institute of Minnesota</u></a>
Implicit Bias	A resource to increase health equity and address implicit bias. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>Implicit Bias Resource Guide</u></a>
Language Access Plan	A language access plan can help ensure that an organization provides high quality and appropriate language services. A language access plan can also help ensure that an organization's staff members are aware of what to do when an individual with limited English proficiency needs assistance. This Guide from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services identifies ways that providers can assess their programs and develop language access plans to ensure persons with limited English proficiency have meaningful access to their programs. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>Guide to Developing a Language Access Plan</u></a>
PA Health Data	Enterprise Data Dissemination Informatics Exchange (EDDIE) is an interactive health statistics dissemination web tool where you can create customized data tables, charts and maps for various health related data. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>Enterprise Data Dissemination Informatics Exchange (EDDIE)</u></a>

<sup>7</sup>International Institute of Minnesota. Published 2023. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://iimn.org/>

<sup>8</sup>Implicit Bias Resource Guide. National Institute for Children’s Health Quality Accessed May 10, 2023. [https://www.nichq.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/Implicit%20Bias%20Resource\\_Final\\_0.pdf](https://www.nichq.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/Implicit%20Bias%20Resource_Final_0.pdf)

<sup>9</sup>Guide to Developing a Language Access Plan. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services; 2022. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/OMH/Downloads/Language-Access-Plan.pdf>

Topic	Description	Links
Pennsylvania Data	PA State Data Center is Pennsylvania's official source of population and economic statistics. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>PA State Data Center</u></a>
Pennsylvania Language Map	A breakdown of non- English language use throughout the commonwealth by county and municipality. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>PA Language Map</u></a>
Digital Accessibility	Section 508 requires that all governmental website content be accessible to people with disabilities. This applies to Web applications, Web pages, and all attached files on the Internet, as well as the Internet. If you are a governmental organization, you must follow this section of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>Section 508</u></a>
Disability Inclusion	As part of the National Center on Health, Physical Activity, and Disability (NCHPAD), the Center on Disability at the Public Health Institute (COD-PHI) has developed these Guidelines for Disability Inclusion in Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity. <sup>24</sup>	<a href="#"><u>Guidelines for Disability Inclusion</u></a>



PROPIO Interpreter Service	Most commonly used interpreter service by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. An interpreter is responsible for ensuring that everything that is said is communicated accurately in the other language. <sup>15</sup>	<u>PROPIO website</u>
Refugees, Immigrants and Migrant/Seasonal Farmworkers	This class is designed to assist librarians and others who work with diverse. <sup>16</sup>	<u>From Beyond Our Borders: Providing Multilingual and</u>
	populations in locating health information. The resources presented are selected for their emphasis on providing culturally relevant information in the preferred language of the population. Background information on refugees and immigrants in the U.S. and their unique health issues will be presented. Participants will have the opportunity to become familiar with the features and scope of several Internet resources.	<u>Multicultural Health Information</u>
Culture and Communication	“PA DOH: Cross-Cultural Communication:” Trainings for external partners developed by PA DOH. There is a culture and communication course, and five cultural competence trainings, lasting one hour each. <sup>24</sup>	<u>TRAIN PA</u>

Health Equity	“Health Equity Learning Bundle:” This learning bundle, developed by the Public Health Foundation, provides frontline professionals with the knowledge to better understand health equity and approaches that can help address related challenges. <sup>17</sup>	<u>TRAIN PA</u>
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<sup>10</sup>Enterprise Data Dissemination Informatics Exchange. Published 2023. Accessed May 10, 2023.

<https://www.phaim1.health.pa.gov/EDD/>

<sup>11</sup>Pennsylvania State Data Center. Published 2023. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu/>

<sup>12</sup>Pennsylvania Languages Map. Published 2023. Accessed May 10, 2023.

<https://padoh.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=edea3b61247d4aa08a833cd52abf573>

<sup>13</sup>Digital Accessibility @ HHS. HHS Accessibility & Section 508. Published March 21, 2023.

Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://www.hhs.gov/web/section-508/index.html>

<sup>14</sup>Guidelines for Disability Inclusion in Programs and Policies. National Center on Health, Physical Activity, and Disability. Published 2023. Accessed May 10, 2023.

<https://www.nchpad.org/1189/5811/Guidelines~for~Disability~Inclusion~in~Programs~and~Policies>

<sup>15</sup>Propio. Published 2023. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://propio-ls.com/>

<sup>16</sup>Providing Multilingual and Multicultural Health Information. Published January 26, 2023. Accessed

May 10, 2023. <https://www.nlm.gov/training/class-catalog/providing-multilingual-and-multicultural-health-information>

<sup>17</sup>Health Equity Learning Bundle. TRAIN PA. Accessed May 10, 2023.

[https://www.train.org/pa/training\\_plan/3776](https://www.train.org/pa/training_plan/3776)

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## ENGAGEMENT, CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

### Does your organization...

- Have a plan to identify CLAS needs for underserved populations?
- Collect client satisfaction data to inform culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery?
- Participate in partnerships with other agencies that target the diverse cultural groups in your service area/population?

### CLAS STANDARDS:

1. Establish culturally and linguistically appropriate goals, policies, and management accountability, and infuse them throughout the organization's planning and operations.
2. Conduct ongoing assessments of the organization's CLAS-related activities and integrate CLAS-related measures into measurement and continuous quality improvement activities.
3. Collect and maintain accurate and reliable demographic data to monitor and evaluate the impact of CLAS on health equity and outcomes and to inform service delivery.
4. Conduct regular assessments of community health assets and needs and use the results to plan and implement services that respond to the cultural and linguistic diversity of populations in the service area.
5. Partner with the community to design, implement, and evaluate policies, practices, and services to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness.
6. Create conflict and grievance resolution processes that are culturally and linguistically appropriate to identify, prevent, and resolve conflicts or complaints.
7. Communicate the organization's progress in implementing and sustaining CLAS to all stakeholders, constituents, and the general public.

### Ways to use these resources to advance the standards:

- Improve collection of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and language data
- Conduct organizational assessments.
- Incorporate CLAS into mission, vision, and strategic plans.

Topic	Description	Links
Health Equity in Funding Announcements	Guidance for Integrating Health Equity Language into Funding Announcements February 2018. This guide is from the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO). <sup>18</sup> developed by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, is to serve as a resource for state and territorial health agencies that are considering incorporating health equity requirements into their funding announcements.	<u>Integrating in Funding</u>

<sup>18</sup>Guidance for Integrating Health Equity Language Into Funding Announcements. Published February 2018. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://www.astho.org/globalassets/pdf/guidance-for-integrating-health-equity-language-into-funding-announcements.pdf>

Topic	Description	Links
PA Health Data	EDDIE is an interactive health statistics dissemination web tool where you can create customized data tables, charts and maps for various health related data. <sup>10</sup>	<u>EDDIE</u>
PA Data	PA State Data Center is Pennsylvania's official source of population and economic statistics. <sup>11</sup>	<u>Data</u>

People with Disabilities	As part of NCHPAD, the COD-PHI has developed these Guidelines for Disability Inclusion in Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity Program Initiatives to assist in the updating of community health programs and policies to be inclusive of the needs of people with disabilities. The guidelines were generated based upon previously recommended guidelines and structured input and review from a panel of national experts. <sup>14</sup>	<a href="#"><u>Guidelines for Disability Inclusion</u></a>
Race and Ethnicity Data Collection Standards	This classification from the federal Department of the Interior, Office of Civil Rights provides a minimum standard for maintaining, collecting, and presenting	<a href="#"><u>Federal Race and Ethnicity Reporting Standards</u></a>

Topic	Description	Links
	data on race and ethnicity for all Federal reporting purposes. The standards have been developed to provide a common language for uniformity and comparability in the collection and use of data on race and ethnicity by Federal agencies. This can be used as an example for organizations to collect race and ethnicity data of their own. <sup>19</sup>	

Racial Equity	From the Praxis Project, the purpose of this assessment is for organizations or programs to reflect on the ways in which they embody health justice and racial equity in practice and to identify opportunities for growth	Working Principles for Health Justice and Racial Equity: <a href="#"><u>Organizational Self-Assessment</u></a>
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Topic	Description	Links
	and improvement. This assessment is simply a guide to facilitate reflection and team discussions, and support actions that organizations can take to improve authentic community partnerships. <sup>20</sup>	
Refugees, Immigrants and Migrants and Seasonal Farmworkers	<p>From Beyond our Borders: Providing Multilingual and Multicultural Health Information</p> <p>This class is designed to assist librarians and others who work with diverse populations in locating health information. The resources presented are selected for their emphasis on providing culturally relevant information in the preferred language of the population. Background information on refugees and immigrants in the U.S. and their unique health issues will be presented.</p>	<a href="#"><u>Multilingual and Multicultural Health Information</u></a>

Role of Race and Ethnicity Data in Eliminating Disparities in Health Care	The National Research Council (US) Panel on DHHS Collection of Race and Ethnic Data discusses the importance of race and ethnicity data collection. This data has the potential to eliminate disparities in health and healthcare, as described in this article. The article discusses challenges, the role of this data, how to use this data (in both private and public sectors), best practices/approaches, and	<u><a href="#">The Role of Racial and Ethnic Data Collection in Eliminating Disparities in Health Care</a></u>
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Topic	Description	Links
	other influential factors in collecting it. <sup>21</sup>	
Sexual and Gender Minorities	Helping Families to Support Their LGBTQIA+ Children. <sup>22</sup>	<u><a href="#">Family Support</a></u>
Sexual and Gender Minorities	Do Ask, Do Tell! Collecting Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Health Centers: These learning resources from the National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center detail ways in which organizations can begin to collect SOGI data in a respectful and appropriate way. <sup>23</sup>	<u><a href="#">Collecting Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Health Centers</a></u>

For an overview of 2013 enhancements to the CLAS Standards, see: **[“What’s New in the National CLAS Standards?”](#)**

<sup>19</sup>Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity. Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights. Published October 30, 1997. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eo/Data-Standards>

<sup>20</sup>Working Principles for Health Justice & Racial Equity Organizational Self-Assessment. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://www.thepraxisproject.org/resource/2020/principles-self-assessment>

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<sup>23</sup>Learning Resources - Collecting Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Data. National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center. Published 2023. Accessed May 10, 2023. <https://www.lgbtqiahealtheducation.org/resources/in/collecting-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-data/>



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## Conclusion and Acknowledgements

In conclusion, this toolkit should be used to begin and/or improve implementation of the National CLAS Standards, but it must not stop there. Cultural competency is not something that can simply be checked off a to-do list; it is a life-long process. These standards and resources will help build a more effective, meaningful, and equitable healthcare system for all Pennsylvanians. They will also allow an organization to properly train their staff to appropriately interact with the community they serve, as well as building an all-around stronger and more compassionate workforce. This toolkit would not be possible without the dedication and work of the Pennsylvania Department of Health's **CLAS Taskforce**, led by the **Director of the Office of Health Equity, David Saunders**.

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