Culturally & Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS)
Strategies Reference Sheet

The CLAS Standards are a set of guidelines to improve the quality of care and services for all patients. CLAS are services that are respectful of and responsive to each person's culture and communication needs. These guidelines help you take into account cultural health beliefs, preferred languages, health literacy levels, and communication needs.

Principal Standard
The achievement of all CLAS Standards

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.	• This is the end goal. • It takes everyone's awareness and participation of CLAS to ensure success. • All of the standards support and improve the work you're already doing and provide a guide to improve better services to your patients. Addressing Standards 2-15 helps to achieve #1.

Governance, Leadership, and Workforce

Success requires that everyone at the organization is invested, supportive, and trained.

CLAS Standard	Key Concept/Words	Examples of Strategies
2. Advance and sustain organizational governance and leadership that promotes CLAS and health equity through policy, practices, and allocated resources.	Leadership Championing CLAS Diverse Board Strong Infrastructure	1. Create a strategic plan that incorporates policies, procedures, staff and financial resources, and organizational systems to support CLAS efforts. 2. Create a CLAS Committee or designate leaders that will focus efforts around providing culturally competent care and ensuring the board represents the patient population being served. 3. Identify Champions who rally and support CLAS internally and externally.
3. Recruit, promote, and support a culturally and linguistically diverse governance, leadership, and workforce that are responsive to the population in the service area.	Diverse Board and Staff that reflect and respond to needs of population	1. Recruit at minority health fairs and job fairs. 2. Create an environment in which differences are respected and that is responsive to the challenges a culturally and linguistically diverse staff brings into the workplace such as incorporation of guidelines. 3. Regularly conduct assessments of hiring and retention data, current workforce demographics, promotion demographics, and community demographics to ensure staff reflects the diversity of the patient/consumer population you serve.

CLAS Standard	Key Concept/Words	Examples of Strategies
4. Educate and train governance, leadership, and workforce in culturally and linguistically appropriate policies and practices on an ongoing basis.	**Board Training** **Staff Development** **CLAS training**	1. Allocate annual budgetary expenditures for on-going CLAS training. 2. Offer on-going training; orientation for new hires; annual training on how to meet the needs of the populations you are serving including CLAS training via brown bag lunch series, and yearly update meetings. 3. Annual training on Cultural Competency, Health Literacy or other topics that are specific to your needs. Think of e-learning/distance learning opportunities.

Communication and Language Assistance		
CLAS Standard	**Key Concept/Words**	**Examples of Strategies**
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.	**Provide Language Services**	1. Analyze language needs and average literacy levels of patients in your service area through observations, clues, self-assessments, focus groups & interviews with existing and new patients. 2. Determine and provide appropriate language assistance for your clients and organization (e.g., medically trained staff interpreters, over-the-phone interpretation, video, or contract interpreters). 3. Ensure staff is aware of and trained in the use of language assistance services, policies, and procedures.
6. Inform all individuals of the availability of language assistance services clearly and in their preferred language, verbally and in writing.	**Inform your patients of the availability of language assistanc**e.	1. Post signs regarding availability of free language interpretation at all points of entry in the language and literacy they will understand. 2. Develop a process to determine a new client's preferred language during intake process (e.g., language cards) and add to clients record, inform them at check in. 3. Create a written policy that offers interpretation at no cost to the client in order to prevent the use of family and friends as interpreters.
7. Ensure the competence of individuals providing language assistance, recognizing that the use of untrained individuals and/or minors as interpreters should be avoided.	**Certified language interpreters**	1. Use medical interpreters that are trained, tested, and certified. 2. Interpreters are assessed via an independent certified system to ensure they are proficient as language interpreters. 3. Use a competency checklist for bilingual staff providing interpreting services and do on-going assessment. 4. Partner with local organizations and universities to offer medical interpretation courses to staff.

CLAS Standard	Key Concept/Words	Examples of Strategies
8. Provide easy-to-understand print and multimedia materials and signage in the languages commonly used by the populations in the service area.	**Written material in clear language and in languages spoken by patients you serve**	1. Create/provide forms in languages that represent community served (ex. applications, consent forms, and medical treatment instructions). 2. Test health educational resource materials with patient populations in focus groups or with CHWs for cultural and linguistic appropriateness. 3. Ensure materials are written at a fourth to sixth grade reading level.

Engagement, Continuous Improvement, and Accountability
Support required from everyone at the organization to ensure success

CLAS Standard	Key Concept/Words	Examples of Strategies
9. Establish culturally and linguistically appropriate goals, policies, and management accountability, and infuse them throughout the organization's planning and operations.	**CLAS is reflected in all aspects of the organization (mission, vision, strategic plans, and collaboration throughout the organization).** Similar to Standard 2 which includes policies, Standard 9 focuses on more detail of the implementation and accountability.	1. Develop mission and value statements that reference the organizations commitment to serving a diverse cultural population. 2. Create a CLAS committee that is responsible for goal setting and implementation of strategies and getting feedback from staff on systems improvement. 3. Develop a strategic plan with participation of consumers, community, and staff who can convey the needs and concerns of all communities and all parts of the organization affected by the strategy. 4. Hold staff diversity events and celebrations honoring differences in cultures (i.e. potlucks and health fairs)
10. Conduct ongoing assessments of the organization's CLAS-related activities and integrate CLAS-related measures into measurement and continuous quality improvement activities.	**Continuous improvement** **Regular self-assessments**	1. Develop staff performance evaluations that include CLAS-related objectives and measures. 2. Include questions related to CLAS performance in all community surveys and other methods used when obtaining input. 3. Hire an outside consultant with expertise in cultural appropriateness to facilitate professional development and organizational improvements.
11. Collect and maintain accurate and reliable demographic data to monitor and evaluate the impact of CLAS on health equity and outcomes & to inform service delivery.	**Utilizing Data to inform services to patient populations**	1. Consistently strive to improve on collection of race, ethnicity, and language data in their service area. 2. Ensure community needs assessment include percentage of: ages, gender, religions, refugees and immigrants, income distribution, unemployed, languages spoken and read, non-English speaking, literacy levels and types of alternative/complementary services. 3. Provide ongoing data training and evaluation to staff.

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.	Community surveys	1. Conduct community surveys to assess how the organization is doing on a regular basis. 2. Use community survey information to plan and implement new services. 3.Reach out to other sources in the community such as faith based organizations, social workers, managed care organizations to collect data, plan, and implement services that respond to cultural and linguistic characteristics of the service area. 4. Conduct patient satisfaction surveys on a regular basis, analyze data and use to inform services.
13. Partner with the community to design, implement, and evaluate policies, practices, and services to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness.	Community partnerships	1.Use surveys, public meetings, focus groups, advisory committees, and coalition building to obtain community input to respond to the needs and preferences of the culturally and ethnically diverse groups served in the area. 2. Participate in community events targeted to people of color to build collaborative partnerships in a participatory environment. 3. Share the lessons learned at these events with management and leadership staff to expand collective knowledge of local cultural practices and beliefs.
14. Create conflict and grievance resolution processes that are culturally and linguistically appropriate to identify, prevent, and resolve conflicts or complaints.	Prepare a Culturally Competent Grievance Process	1. Train staff to serve as mediators in cross-cultural conflicts or have a designated, independent, cultural mediator to help resolve conflicts.2. Create a set of conflict and grievance resolution policies which value organizational respect for cultural norms that is factored into dealing with any conflict or grievance.3. Develop a policy that describes how your grievance system complies with anti-discrimination regulations.
15. Communicate the organization's progress in implementing and sustaining CLAS to all stakeholders, constituents, and the general public.	Transparency	1. Announce organizational changes or new programs in response to CLAS standards via standalone documents, grant applications, newspaper articles, television, radio, and postings on websites. 2. Disseminate strategic plan to donors and post on website. 3. Provide written updates on CLAS related activities, progress, and challenges; and make written information available to the public at least annually.

© 2020 NCFH CLAS Implementation Strategies Reference Sheet