

Sustainable Systems to Support Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS)

Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS)

CLAS is a way to improve the quality of services provided to all individuals, which will ultimately help reduce health disparities

CLAS is about respect and responsiveness

CLAS Standards

Provide a blueprint for individuals and organizations to implement culturally and linguistically appropriate services



<https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/clas>

National CLAS Standards

Principal Standard

Governance, Leadership and Workforce (Standards 2-4)

Communication and Language Assistance (Standards 5-8)

Engagement, Continuous Improvement, and Accountability
(Standards 9-15)

History of CONNECTing with CLAS in Connecticut

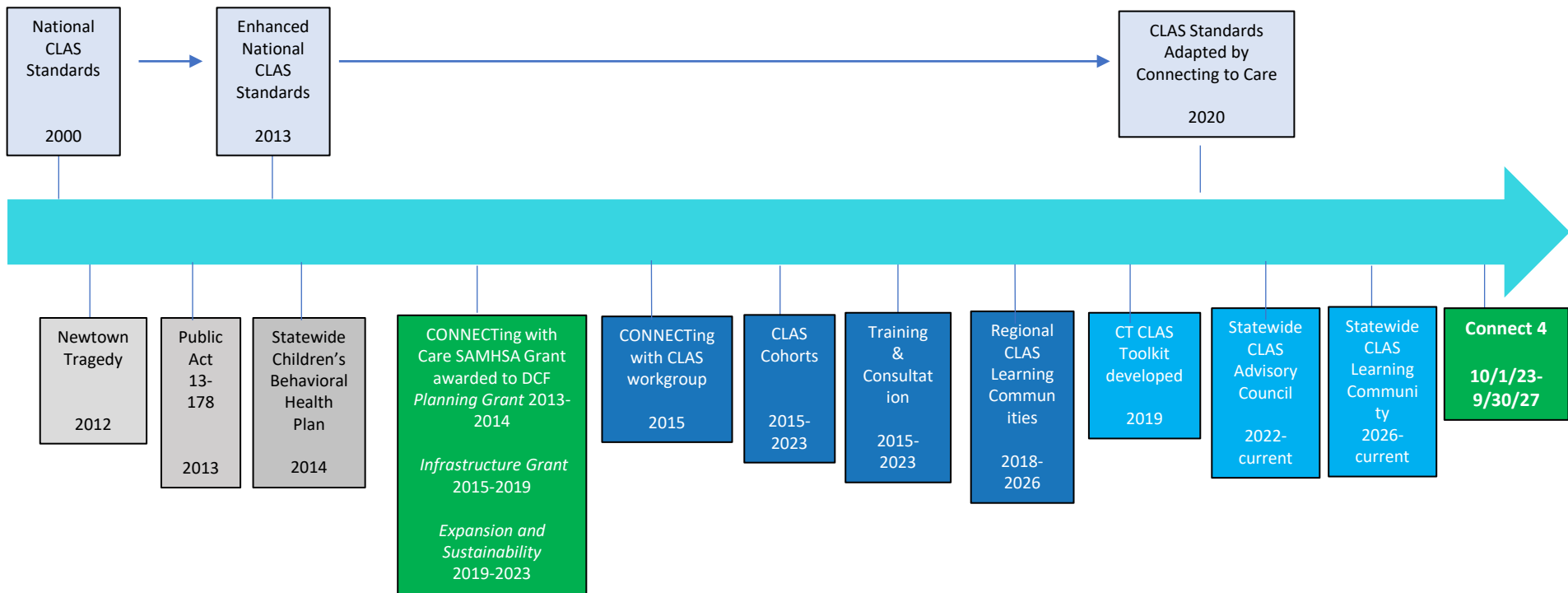
Connecting to Care

Connecting to Care is a DCF awarded federal SAMSHA initiative that is focused on improving the state's behavioral health system of care for children. In order to best serve all children with behavioral health needs in our state, the services that children and families might benefit from must be **culturally responsive**, and **linguistically appropriate**.

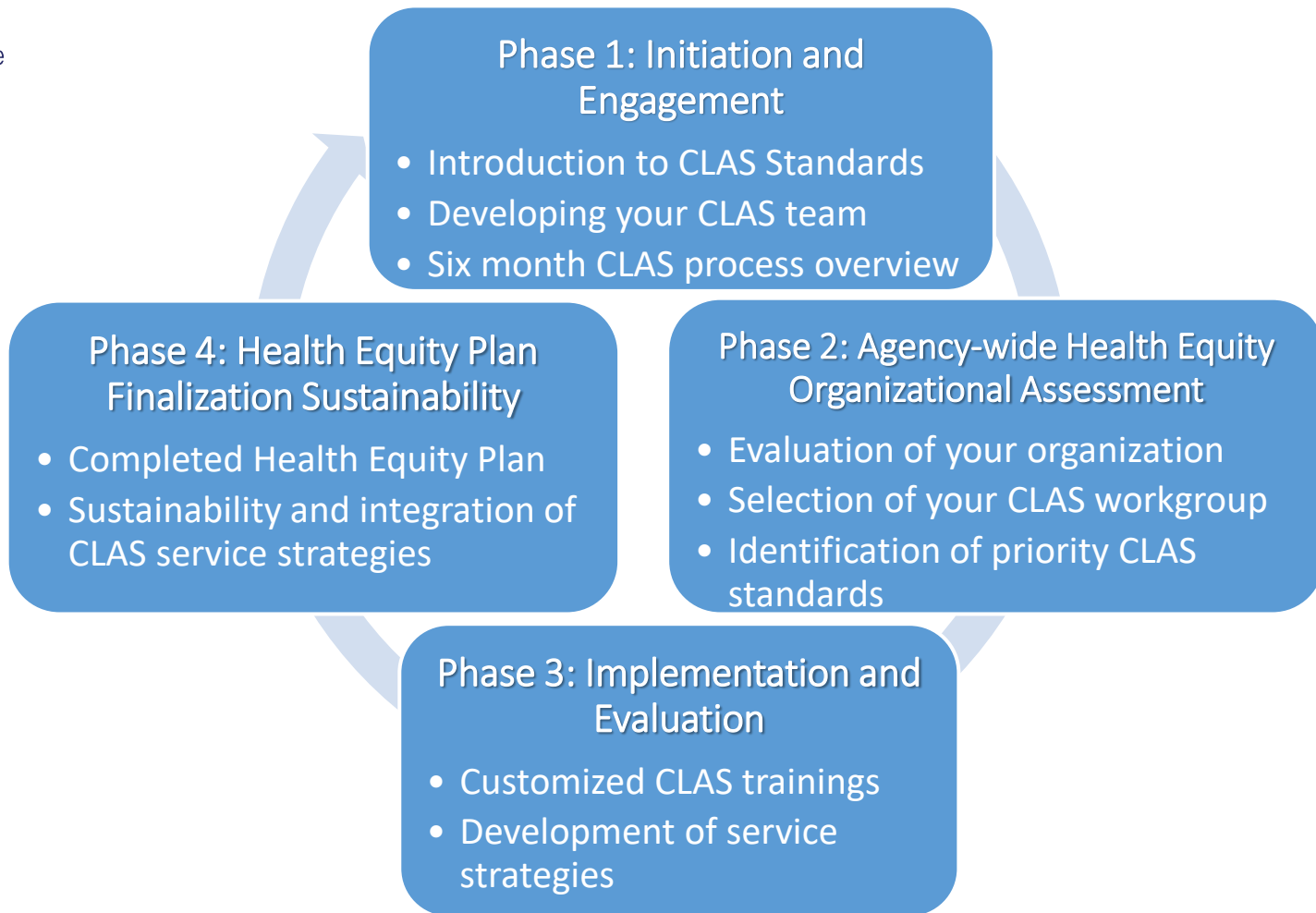
Connecting to Care Goals

- ➔ **Goal 1:** Create a youth and family driven local, regional, and statewide infrastructure for system of care expansion and implementation.
- ➔ **Goal 2:** Implement a youth-guided, family-driven, and culturally competent approach to statewide system of care planning, expansion, and implementation.
- ➔ **Goal 3:** Develop a comprehensive CONNECT Statewide System of Care Strategic Plan.
- ➔ **Goal 4:** Develop a comprehensive statewide data system to promote integration & quality.

CONNECTing with CLAS Timeline



Four Phase Change Model to Develop Health Equity Plans & Address Health Disparities



Training/Consultation Menu

Initiation/Engagement



- Introduction to the CLAS Standards
- Implicit Bias and Cultural Humility
- Introduction to Health Equity Planning
- CLAS Toolkit Training

Implementation



- Health Equity Planning: 6-month cohort process using the **Four-Phase Model of Change**
- Self Exploration of the Toolkit

Evaluation



- Individualized Technical Assistance
- Health Equity Outcome Measures
- Health Equity Data Strategic Planning
- Training on Health Equity Plan Evaluation Strategies

Sustainability



- CLAS Learning Communities
- How to Facilitate Courageous Conversations Trainings
- CLAS Toolkit

SAMPLE CLAS Health Equity Plan

CLAS STANDARD 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.

STRATEGY	TASKS/ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	IMPACT/RESULTS	ACCOUNTABILITY	PROGRESS NOTES
Ensure all staff are aware of Interpretation and translation resources	1. Explore what agency policies are on translation resources and vendors	1.Dec 2022	- Will see a decrease of at least 20% in the number of staff that select unknown in CLAS Survey assessment Question 8 - Review the Interpretation workflow in at least 2 all staff meetings throughout the year 90% supervisors to review Interpretation and translation guidelines with their staff by 3/2023 by reporting completion to Director - Establish a baseline data of current Language Assistance use. Would like to increase usage by 10% from baseline data	See an increase in number of staff using Language Line services and translation services for written materials by pulling another ad hoc report on language line usage	Senior Management, consumer and family feedback	Requested report about Language Line usage for past 5 years to begin review of baseline data. Awaiting results
	2. Include information about how to access translation and interpretation services in DEI new employee orientation	2. Aug 2022				
		3.Aug 2022				
	3. Review Interpretation workflow and translation guidelines in all staff meeting	4.March 2023				Updated new employee orientation to include Interpretation workflow from August 2022 trainings and ongoing.
		5.Dec 2022				
	4. Supervisors to review Interpretation workflow and translation guidelines w/ their employees in departmental overviews and/or team meetings	6.March2023		See increase in number of staff who are aware of our policies and that we have interpretation services using CLAS Standard assessment		Reviewed Interpretation workflow in Aug 2022 all staff meeting
	5. Gather data from Language Line vendor to determine how often it is being used and for what languages.			We would be more responsive to member needs as they would receive information and services in their preferred language.		
	6. Review DEI survey and consider adding a question about language assistance					

CLAS Cohort Outcomes

65 organizations trained in the 6 month cohort process between 2016-2023 have developed Health Equity plans and formed internal workgroups.

94%
of Organizations
that graduated
from the CLAS
cohort still have a
Health Equity Plan

85%
of Organizations
that graduated
from the CLAS
cohort still have
an internal
workgroup

85%
of Organizations
that graduated
from the CLAS
cohort report still
being able to
prioritize CLAS
work

What are the benefits you have seen after implementing CLAS standards?

- ✓ Improved engagement and communication with clients (translated materials, improved questions on intake forms)
- ✓ Increase in diverse and bi-lingual staff
- ✓ Staff report work environment is more inclusive and increased morale
- ✓ Improved client outcomes (fewer no shows and increase in clients reporting feeling like they are heard)
- ✓ Added CLAS overview to new employee orientation and increased related trainings
- ✓ CLAS and Health Equity is woven into practice and policy and alignment with mission and vision

Trainings Offered between 7/1/20-9/30/23

Training	# Trained
Implicit Bias & Cultural Humility	542
CLAS Standards Overview	680
Introduction to Health Equity Planning	345
Best Practices in Language Interpretation	53
Building Capacity to Evaluate Health Equity Plan Strategies	78
Other Trainings: Health Disparities Data Social Determinants of Health Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	302

How to Facilitate Courageous Conversations Training

8 trainings held between 2022-2023 with 163 unique participants across 53 agencies

Grant Writing Workshop

428 trained
Including several grassroots organizations, caregiver/family, and young adults

**2,591
Trained**

Additional Support 2023 CLAS Learning Labs

Learning Labs:

- Small focused group learning environments
- Allows for specialized group consultation and learning
- Only available to agencies that participated in the cohorts
- Facilitated by Connecting to Care CLAS consultants

Focused on the following CLAS Standards:

- ✓ CLAS Standards 2-4: Governance Leadership and Workforce
28 in attendance over 2 sessions (not a unique count)
- ✓ CLAS Standards 5-8: Language and Communication Assistance
16 in attendance over 2 sessions (not a unique count)
- ✓ CLAS Standard 11: Collect and maintain accurate and reliable demographic data to monitor and evaluate the impact of CLAS on health equity outcomes and to inform service delivery
25 in attendance over 2 sessions (not a unique count)

Challenges and Lessons Learned

-  This work takes time
-  Organizations need to have resources (access to funding, time, dedicated staff)
-  Staff turnover and staff vacancies
-  Need for continuous training of staff
-  Difficulties incorporating CLAS in larger healthcare systems or agencies
-  Can be difficult to get board or funder buy in
-  Challenges with data (collection, analyzing)
-  Challenges serving diverse communities

Strategies



Toolkit



CLAS Health
Equity website
development



Learning Labs



CLAS Learning
Communities



Incorporating
ongoing support
into Network of
Care roles



Statewide CLAS
Advisory Council
(SCAC)



Consumer
feedback and
input



Recommendations

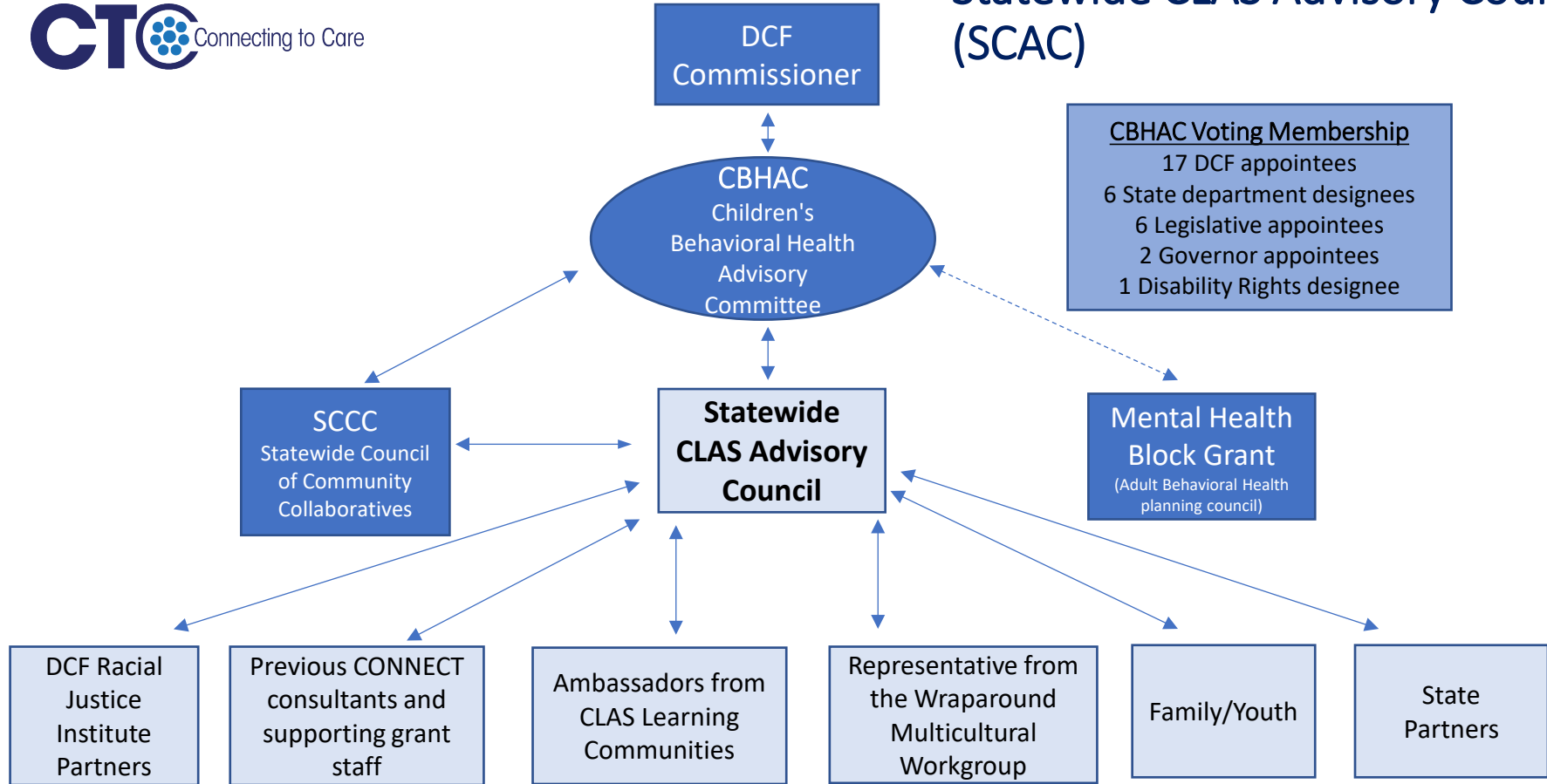
Sustainability and Building a Statewide Infrastructure

Why do we need a statewide infrastructure?

- Sustainability was always the goal
- Multiple initiatives with similar goals and interests
- Lessons learned taught us that providers need continuous support
- We value family and youth feedback
- Needed a vehicle for change that included the ability to make recommendations and create advocacy opportunities



Statewide CLAS Advisory Council (SCAC)



Statewide CLAS Advisory Council (SCAC)

- Has been meeting quarterly since 2022
- SCAC works to develop, plan and implement a statewide process for incorporating enhanced Culturally Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) standards within the children's Network of Care in Connecticut
- Partnering with families and network of care leaders to promote health equity, and cultural and linguistic competence across all behavioral health services at the local, regional and state levels



Statewide CLAS Advisory Council (SCAC) Recommendations

Recommendations made to the DCF Commissioner & legislators in the 2026 CBHAC report included:

- ✓ Establish a process to ensure DCF contracted providers develop, regularly update, and demonstrate progress towards implementing CLAS/Health Equity plans
- ✓ Align DCF's Racial Justice, CLAS, Health equity and other initiatives
- ✓ Establish minimum CLAC competency requirements for DCF contracted providers (including new employee orientation/ refreshers)
- ✓ Integrate independent, trained peer support professionals with lived experience into the investigation process
- ✓ Invest in culturally and linguistically responsive community outreach for underserved communities
- ✓ Standardize demographic, outcome, and satisfaction data collection across state agencies to support consistent analysis of disparities
- ✓ Allocate funding for CLAS infrastructure, interpretation/translation, supporting bi-lingual multicultural staff

CLAS Learning Communities

CLAS Learning Communities Objectives:

- Share best practices of implementation of National CLAS Standards
- Educate the community on health equity and CLAS Standards
- Share strategies of family and youth engagement to support agency CLAS activities and health equity plan development and implementation
- Collaborate with advocates, families, and community partners working on similar initiatives

Regional → Statewide CLAS Learning Communities

Regional Quarterly Learning Communities 2018-2025

- ✓ Regional CLAS Learning Communities enhance and sustain the work of Connecting to Care & support the Statewide Children's Behavioral Health Plan
- ✓ Have been meeting quarterly since 2018

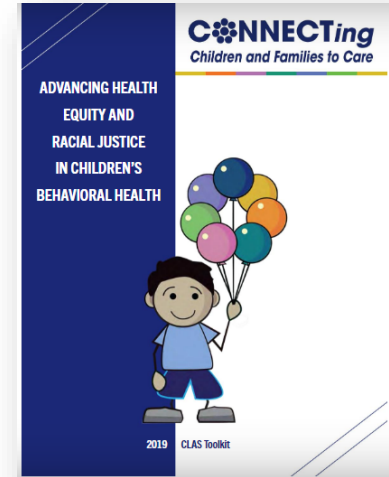
New Statewide CLAS Learning Community 2026-Current

- ✓ May 2026: Supporting Families Facing Immigration Related Stress Presentation by MDFT, International, Inc
- ✓ Developed Immigration Resource Document (English & Spanish)
- ✓ Survey distributed to help plan a late 2026 Learning Community

107 participants at
the Statewide CLAS LC
Kickoff

Sustained Work

- SCAC
- Statewide CLAS Learning Community
- [CLAS Toolkit](#)
- [Connecting to Care website and CLAS Resource Library](#)
- CLAS Newsletter
- Carelon Behavioral Health Network of Care Manager each DCF Region to support the CLAS Learning Communities and ongoing CLAS work



<https://www.connectingtocarect.org/about-us/health-equity/culturally-and-linguistically-appropriate-services-clas-library/>

Opportunities

- **Collaboration** with BHPOC CLAS subcommittee
- Participate on the **SCAC**
- Participate in the Statewide CLAS **Learning Community**
- Review the **resources** on Connectingtocarect.org
- Sign up for the **CLAS Newsletter**
- Present the work you/your community is doing



Contact: CTNetworkofCareManagers@carelon.com

CLAS at Carelton Behavioral Health

Enhancing Cultural and Linguistic Competency

How Carelon Behavioral Health CT advances CLAS standards internally and externally

Governance, Leadership, and Workforce: Carelon BH CT advances CLAS adoption through an Organizational CLAS Standards Assessment to understand how well we are meeting the National CLAS Standards and to identify priorities for continued health equity work.

IN

Internal — Cultivate a Healthy Workforce Culture

Workforce Education and Training

- Use staff surveys to assess experience, culture, and opportunities for improvement.
- Reinforce CLAS awareness through creation of CLAS Learning Corner, a monthly newsletter to keep cultural and linguistic responsiveness visible.
- Provide cultural competency training, including skills for facilitating courageous conversations.
- Revisit and revise the Health Equity Strategy/Plan to align priorities, actions, and accountability.
- Build a workforce that reflects the communities served, with staff development in equity, whole health, and inclusion.

OUT

External — Strengthening Community Partnerships, Accountability, & Continuous Learning

System, Provider, Communities, Members

- Host educational forums on topics such as gender-affirming care, post-incarceration healing, faith communities in substance use recovery, and health equity in SUD treatment.
- Develop and maintain the [Creating New Pathways Faith-Based Toolkit](#) to strengthen trusted partnerships, reduce stigma, and address racial and ethnic disparities.
- Use HUSKY Health member surveys and other assessments to elevate member experience and needs.
- Distributed DPH's "I Speak" language cards in sixteen languages, including American Sign Language at the iCAN conference.
- Support statewide CLAS infrastructure by advancing CLAS priorities through recommendations to statewide advisory councils, learning communities, and provider support.

Thank You

Contact

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