

October 6, 2026 CLAS Committee Zoom Meeting

Quick recap

The meeting focused on the work of the Cultural Linguistic Appropriate Service Committee and the sustainable systems built to support CLAS in Connecticut. Lisa Palazzo (Carelton) presented the history and structure of the Connecting to Care grant, including the development of a four-phase change model, a toolkit, and the Statewide CLAS Advisory Council (SCAC) as a subcommittee of CBAC. She shared data showing that 65 organizations developed health equity plans and that 94% still had plans six months after cohort graduation. Kim Haugabook (Carelton) described how Carelon Behavioral Health integrated CLAS standards through internal staff surveys, monthly newsletters, and external initiatives like educational forums and a faith-based toolkit. Co-Chair Brenetta Henry emphasized the need to recognize the impact of families and consumers in these initiatives and highlighted the importance of closing the feedback loop with the community. Carlos Blanco discussed the challenges of maintaining health equity plans and the need for providers to engage directly with their local communities. Loida Reyes shared news about a grant to create a pipeline for men in social work at Southern Connecticut College, and Dawn Brown mentioned efforts to offer the LMSW exam in multiple languages. The conversation ended with a brief mention of the successful iCAN conference and a note that there would be no meeting in November.

Next steps

Brenetta Henry

- Include a discussion on the intersectionality of the CLAS group in the agenda for the next meeting in December.

Dawn Brown

- Send the link to the survey regarding language considerations for the LMSW to distribute to the group.

Stephanie Bozak

- Gather specific ideas from attendees on how to effectively close the feedback loop with communities and consumers after their input is incorporated into initiatives.

Collaboration

- All attendees: Consider attending the Statewide CLAS Advisory Council (SCAC) meetings and participating in the CLAS learning communities.
- All attendees: Consider signing up for the CLAS newsletter or sending information about their work to Lisa Palazzo or the Network of Care Manager email for cross-promotion.

Summary

Meeting Start and Updates

The meeting began at 11:00 AM with participants joining. Carlos Blanco congratulated Brenetta Henry on an excellent iCAN conference last month.

CLAS Committee Monthly Meeting

Brenetta Henry opened the monthly CLAS (Cultural Linguistic Appropriate Service) committee meeting and welcomed attendees, including Co-Chair Alice Forrester. The meeting featured a

presentation by Drs. Stephney Springer, Stephanie Bozak from the Department of Children and Families, and Lisa Palazzo from Caredon Behavioral Health, along with Kim Hagabook, who discussed the Connect grant work and CLAS initiatives. The presenters were introduced to share their roles and prepare for the main presentation about the comprehensive children's mental health grant and system of care efforts in Connecticut.

CLAS Standards Implementation Presentation

Lisa Palazzo presented on CLAS (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services) standards and their implementation through the Connecting to Care grant in Connecticut. She outlined the 15 CLAS standards grouped into themes of governance, leadership, workforce, communication and language assistance, and engagement, continuous improvement, and accountability. The discussion focused on how these standards help reduce health disparities by tailoring services to meet individual cultural and language preferences.

CLAS Implementation in Connecticut

Lisa and Kim Hagabook presented on the implementation of CLAS (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services) standards in Connecticut's statewide system of care, highlighting the four-phase change model, training programs, and the development of sustainable structures including the Statewide CLAS Advisory Council (SCAC) and learning communities. They discussed the challenges of maintaining health equity plans and the strategies developed to ensure long-term sustainability, including toolkits, websites, and ongoing support systems. The presentation included examples of how Caredon Behavioral Health Network has integrated CLAS standards into their policies and procedures. Brenetta raised important concerns about the need to recognize and acknowledge the contributions of families and consumers in the CLAS initiative, emphasizing that their input has been instrumental in designing statewide infrastructure like iCAN. Several participants, including Carlos Blanco and Dawn Brown, discussed the importance of following up with community members who provide feedback to ensure they see the impact of their contributions and maintain trust in the process.