



Tools to address cultural gaps in care

CarePlus Health Plans Inc. (“CarePlus”) recognizes cultural differences and the influence that race, ethnicity, language and socioeconomic status have on the healthcare experience and health outcomes. We are committed to developing strategies that eliminate health disparities and address gaps in care.

Background

A report by the Institute of Medicine, “Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care,” released on March 20, 2002, found racial and ethnic differences in the quality of care delivered across a wide range of settings and disease conditions, even when controlling for socioeconomic factors such as income and insurance coverage. Annual National Healthcare Disparities reports from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) have confirmed that these gaps persist in the American healthcare system.

Communication is paramount in delivering effective care. Mutual understanding may be difficult when doctors and patients come from different cultures. Language barriers, cultural norms, beliefs and attitudes that determine healthcare-seeking behaviors can contribute to miscommunication. By becoming more aware of their patients’ cultural needs and by improving communication with their growing numbers of diverse patients, doctors can address racial and ethnic gaps in healthcare.

CarePlus offers a number of initiatives intended to deliver healthcare services to all members, regardless of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, transgender status, marital status, socioeconomic status, veteran status, or religion. Some of these initiatives include member services representatives who are fluent in English and Spanish, translation services provided by a certified translation vendor, a Spanish-language website and education of CarePlus associates in cultural competency. While making strides in addressing diversity and disparities in healthcare, CarePlus continues to work to improve its current processes.

Resources for continuing medical education

Another CarePlus initiative offers physicians and other healthcare providers resources and materials, including the following tools, to improve awareness of gaps in care and to promote culturally competent care.

Web-based module for continuing education credit

- ❑ **A Physician's Practical Guide to Culturally Competent Care**, a guide from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Office of Minority Health (9.0 continuing medical education credits)
cccm.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/

Learn more about the cultures you serve

- ❑ **The Provider's Guide to Quality & Culture**, a website administered by Management Sciences for Health
<https://innovations.ahrq.gov/qualitytools/providers-guide-quality-culture-0>
- ❑ **Culture, Language and Health Literacy**, a website run by the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
<https://www.hrsa.gov/cultural-competence/index.html>

Toolkits for clear health communication and language services

- ❑ **Ask Me 3™: Good Questions for Your Good Health**
A quick and effective tool from the National Patient Safety Foundation for raising awareness about health literacy and improving communication between doctors and patients
<https://npsf.site-ym.com/default.asp?page=askme3>
- ❑ **The Guide to Providing Effective Communication and Language Assistance Services**, a document from the Office of Minority Health that can help physicians better serve patients with limited English proficiency
hclsig.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/

Frameworks and guidelines for culturally appropriate care

- ❑ **National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care**, a report published by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
<https://www.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/clas>
- ❑ **One Size Does Not Fit All: Meeting the Health Care Needs of Diverse Populations**, a guide from the Joint Commission
<https://innovations.ahrq.gov/qualitytools/one-size-does-not-fit-all-meeting-health-care-needs-diverse-populations>

Additional sources that address healthcare disparities

- ❑ **National Healthcare Quality & Disparities Reports**, a collection of the annual reports that track disparities related to the quality of and access to healthcare, published by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
<https://www.ahrq.gov/research/findings/nhqdr/index.html>
- ❑ **Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care**, the landmark report that raised awareness of clinical disparities among diverse populations, published by the Institute of Medicine
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25032386>

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