

# Cultural Competency: BRIDGING THE COMMUNICATION GAP



## What Is Cultural Competency?

Cultural Competency encompasses our Health Plans beliefs, values, and commitment to improving the health of the community. It is the ability to interact effectively with people from different cultures and backgrounds by learning about and honoring the diverse cultures of those you work with.

## Why Is Cultural Competency Important?

Better intercultural and linguistic communications can play a role in reducing health disparities which are prevalent throughout Arizona and the nation. The 2020 U.S. Census<sup>1</sup> revealed nearly 68 million people (approximately 1-in-5) spoke a language other than English, revealing approximately 29.4% of Arizona residents aged 5-years+ speak a language other than English, which presents numerous opportunities for misunderstanding information related to health care, conditions and-or medications. The top three non-English languages spoken in Arizona are Spanish, 20.8% (1,202,638 residents), Navajo, 1.18% (150,000), and German, 0.4% (22,592)

## What Can You Do to Become More Culturally Competent?

As an organization, our Health Plan uses the National Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (C.L.A.S.)<sup>2</sup> standards from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health to guide our efforts to become more culturally competent and advance health equity. Here are a few standards to guide you:

Principle Standard	Governance, Leadership & Workforce
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.	Recruit, promote and support a culturally and linguistically diverse governance, leadership and workforce that are responsive to the population in the service area.
Communication & Language Assistance	Engagement, Improvement & Accountability
Offer communication and 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.	Establish culturally and linguistically appropriate goals, policies, and management accountability, and infuse them throughout the organization's planning and operations.

## What Is Culturally Responsive Care?

The intentional and consistent decisions our Health Plan make to see, respect, and celebrate the aspects that make each person. It's an acknowledgment of their intersectional existence in the world and how this shapes their experiences. Culturally responsive care is a philosophy that guides health providers toward fully seeing and valuing people for all aspects of their identity, background, language, and experiences. By helping people feel safe, understood, and accepted, cultural competence makes health and care more accessible and effective.

## What is Cultural Programming?

Is culturally responsive education, teaching and-or care services in which the curricula-learning environments use the person's customs, characteristics, experiences, and perspectives (or better known as cultural identities) as tools for effective learning and instruction, which increases cognitive behavioral change.

## What is Health Literacy?

<sup>1</sup> "Arizona: 2020 Census." United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/arizona-population-change-between-census-decade.html>.

<sup>2</sup> "U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/clas>

<sup>3</sup> "Center for Health Care Strategies. <https://www.chcs.org/>

<sup>4</sup> "Healthy People 2030. [Health Literacy in Healthy People 2030](https://www.healthypeople.gov/2030/)

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Health Literacy is the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate decisions<sup>3</sup>. A person's level of health literacy can impact how and when they take their medications, their cognitive understanding of their health conditions, attendance at their appointments, treatment adherence, and the informed choices they make regarding treatment. Low health literacy has been linked to poor health outcomes, such as higher rates of hospitalization-costs-stays and less frequent use of preventive services<sup>4</sup>.

Signs of Low Health Literacy:	What Can You Do?
Noncompliance with medication regimens, incomplete registration forms, asks few questions or appointment attendance.	Use plain, non-medical language – Use terms like “high blood pressure” instead of “hypertension” or “skin doctor” instead of “dermatologist”.
Unable to name medications, inability to explain medication purpose or dosage, and unable to provide coherent medical history.	Create a safe-shame-free environment that encourages people to ask questions and promote family centered care.
Saying they “forgot their glasses” if they cannot read something. Or, say “that they have trouble remembering because of age or that they have too many things going on in their life.”	Use the “Teach-Back” Method is a way of checking understanding by asking patients to state in their own words what they need to know or do about their health (for example, the Ask Me 3® questions), and way to confirm that you have explained things in a manner your patient understand.

## Language Access Assistance:

Our Health Plan provides language assistance services to providers-patients at no cost. To obtain access, follow these steps:

- AzCH-CCP: call our Customer Service Center to make the interpretation-translation requests at 1-866-796-0542 (TTY 711). Please give as much notice as possible, at a minimum of 7-10 business days when making requests.

## Cultural Sensitivity-Health Literacy Training Resources:

- Health Plan training resources
  - AzCH-CCP: <https://www.azcompletehealth.com/providers/resources/provider-training.html>
- “A Physicians Practical Guide to Culturally Competent Care”. <https://cccm.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov>
- “Patient Education Materials Assessment Tool” (PEMAT): <https://www.ahrq.gov/ncepcr/tools/self-mgmt/pemat.html>
- “Clear Communication Index” (Index):  
[https://www.cdc.gov/ccindex/index.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fhealthcommunication%2Fclearcommunicationindex%2Findex.html](https://www.cdc.gov/ccindex/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fhealthcommunication%2Fclearcommunicationindex%2Findex.html)
- Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit:  
[https://www.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/publications/files/healthlittoolkit2\\_3.pdf](https://www.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/publications/files/healthlittoolkit2_3.pdf)

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