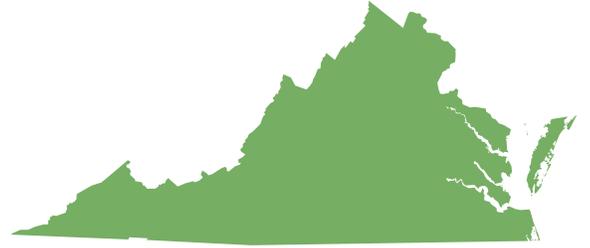


# Virginia



## National CLAS Standards Planning, Policies, and Collaboration

The Virginia Department of Health's Office of Minority Health and Health Equity has documented in its [Strategic Plan](#)<sup>1</sup> activities to achieve the goal of culturally and linguistically appropriate health care for Virginians. Most of the activities are led by the office's CLAS Act Specialist, whose chief responsibility is implementing the National CLAS Standards. The plan calls for periodic assessment of language needs, coordination of cultural training, and development of partnerships with internal and external stakeholders.

In 2010, the Office of Minority Health and Health Equity released a [Language Needs Assessment Report](#)<sup>2</sup> that details the limited English proficiency status of residents of the state's 35 health districts. The report describes the need for language assistance as measured by the percentage of the population speaking English "less than well," and provides information about the prevalence of languages spoken so services can be tailored to the population's linguistic needs.

The Office of Minority Health and Health Equity staffs the [Advisory Council on Health Disparity and Health Equity](#),<sup>3</sup> which includes representatives from local and state public health agencies as well as universities, other state organizations, private health care providers, and consumers. The Advisory Council advocates for the elimination of health disparities among all racial and ethnic minorities and other underserved populations in Virginia. The Advisory Council also identifies limitations associated with existing laws, regulations, and services; reviews health promotion and disease prevention strategies; and makes recommendations to the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Health.

The Office of Minority Health and Health Equity also participates in the [Virginia Medical Interpreting Collaborative Network](#),<sup>4</sup> an effort to build partnerships across organizations and with individuals to increase language access and to support quality medical interpretation.

## National CLAS Standards Training and Technical Assistance

As described on the [CLAS initiatives website](#)<sup>5</sup> of the Office of Minority Health and Health Equity, the Virginia Department of Health has developed a curriculum for its employees that provides training on cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural skill, and cultural encounters in public health settings. The curriculum, developed in collaboration with ten Virginia institutions of higher education, was designed in response to the findings of a 2007 cultural sensitivity needs assessment.

The Office of Minority Health and Health Equity also awards mini-grants supporting health equity and cultural competency activities at the health district level. For example, [awardees in 2013](#)<sup>6</sup> used funds for cultural competency training, portable translators, medical interpretation training, and other activities.

## National CLAS Standards Dissemination

[CLAS Act Virginia](#)<sup>7</sup> is a comprehensive website and database containing national and state-specific information on cultural and linguistic competency, assessment, and events. It won a 2007 Vision Award as an outstanding and creative state health program from the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. The website features:

- An interface for accessing national, state, and regional resources for developing cultural competency, including relevant legislation and regulations;

- An interface for accessing national and state information about language barriers to access, translations of key emergency and clinical terms, and a database of translators in Virginia;
- Research resources to help organizations assess their readiness for delivering CLAS and collecting data on CLAS, along with Virginia-specific studies and reports; and
- A calendar of CLAS events.

The Office of Minority Health and Health Equity created an online resource on language access that links users to information on the enhanced National CLAS Standards, cultural information, translated materials, and research and training resources. The [Virginia Medical Interpreter Database](#)<sup>8</sup> also assists health care providers to connect with local language assistance providers.

The CLAS initiatives website of the Virginia Office of Minority Health and Health Equity features [Navigating Through the U.S. Health Care System for Immigrants, Refugees and Migrants](#),<sup>9</sup> a set of books to help non-English-speaking newcomers to the United States learn about the U.S. health care system. The “Newcomer’s Guide” explains the U.S. health care system, and the “Resource Guide” is a directory of health care facilities and information in Virginia. The books are published in English, Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese, and Russian. The website also provides a video and a curriculum advising community groups working with immigrant populations on how to present the materials. Health care providers may use a [Language Identification Poster](#)<sup>10</sup> to help determine the language needs of specific patients.

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## Endnotes

- 1 Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Public Health Policy. (n.d.). *Strategic Plan*. Retrieved December 30, 2014, from Virginia Department of Health: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OMHHE/documents/strategic-plan.pdf>.
- 2 Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity. (n.d.). *Language Resources*. Retrieved December 30, 2014, from CLAS Act Virginia: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/ohpp/clasact/LanguageProfile.aspx>.
- 3 Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity. (n.d.). *The Commissioner’s Advisory Council on Health Disparity and Health Equity*. Retrieved December 30, 2014, from Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OMHHE/healthequity/MHAC.htm>.
- 4 Virginia Medical Interpreting Collaborative. (n.d.) *Virginia Medical Interpreting Collaborative website*. Retrieved March 5, 2015: <http://www.vmicn.org>.
- 5 Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity. (n.d.). *Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Service (CLAS) Initiatives*. Retrieved December 30, 2014, from Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OMHHE/healthequity/clasact.htm>.
- 6 Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity. (n.d.). *2013 Health Equity and Cultural Competency Mini-Grants*. Retrieved December 30, 2014, from Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OMHHE/healthequity/mini-grants.htm>.
- 7 Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity. (n.d.). *CLAS Act Virginia*. Retrieved December 30, 2014, from Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/ohpp/clasact/default.aspx>.
- 8 Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity. (n.d.). *Medical Interpreter Database*. Retrieved December 30, 2014, from Virginia Department of Health: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OMHHE/healthequity/MID/Home/Disclaimer>.
- 9 Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity. (n.d.). *Navigating the U.S. Health Care System*. Retrieved December 30, 2014, from Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OMHHE/healthequity/navigating-healthcare.htm>.
- 10 Virginia Department of Health, Office of Minority Health and Public Health Policy. (n.d.). *Language Identification Card*. Retrieved December 30, 2014, from Virginia Department of Health: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OMHHE/healthequity/documents/8x11languagecard.pdf>.