



Tools to address cultural gaps in care

CarePlus Health Plans Inc. (“CarePlus”) recognizes that despite the improvements in the overall health of the country, racial and ethnic minorities experience a lower quality of health care, making them less likely to receive routine medical care, refuse treatment and face higher rates of morbidity and mortality than non-minorities. We are committed to developing strategies that eliminate health disparities and encourage providers to examine their own practices to ensure equity in health care.

Background

In 2000, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched *Healthy People 2010*, which had two broad goals: to improve the overall health status of Americans and to eliminate racial and ethnic health care disparities. In 2003, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) report¹ on unequal treatment concluded racial and ethnic disparities in health care exist and, because they are associated with worse outcomes in many cases, are unacceptable. Since the publication of the IOM report there has been renewed interest in understanding the sources of disparities, identifying contributing factors and designing and evaluating effective interventions to reduce or eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health care.²

CarePlus offers several initiatives intended to deliver healthcare services to all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, language, disability, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status or religion. Some of these initiatives include:

- Ensuring the number of network minority providers reflect the diversity of our member population.
- Partnering with underserved communities through national grants to help eliminate barriers to healthy living and access to quality care.
- Member service representatives who are fluent in English and Spanish, and a Spanish-language website accessible to all members and visitors.
- Education of CarePlus associates in cultural competency.

Resources for continuing medical education

Cultural competence refers to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors required of a healthcare professional to provide optimal care and services to patients from a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. CarePlus 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 and equitable 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 free continuing medical education credits).
[Physician's Site \(hhs.gov\)](https://www.hhs.gov/ohrt/cultural-competence)

Learn more about the cultures you serve

- ❑ **Cultural Competence**, through its focus on health literacy, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) provides information for providers and patients related to cultural competence.
[Cultural Competence | Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality \(ahrq.gov\)](https://www.ahrq.gov/cultural-competence)
- ❑ **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 (HHS).
[Culture, Language, and Health Literacy](https://www.hhs.gov/culture-language-and-health-literacy)

Toolkits for clear health communication and language services

- ❑ **Ask Me 3™: Good Questions for Your Good Health**, a quick and effective tool from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) that encourages patients and families to ask specific question to their providers to better understand their health conditions and what they need to do to stay healthy.
[Ask Me 3: Good Questions for Your Good Health](https://www.ahrq.gov/ask-me-3)
- ❑ **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.
[Guide to Providing Effective Communication and Language Assistance Services](https://www.ahrq.gov/guide-to-providing-effective-communication-and-language-assistance-services)

Frameworks and guidelines for culturally appropriate care

- ❑ **National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care**, a report published by HHS.
[National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services \(CLAS\) in Health and Health Care](#)
- ❑ **One Size Does Not Fit All: Meeting the Health Care Needs of Diverse Populations**, a guide from The Joint Commission (TJC).
[One Size Does Not Fit All: Meeting the Health Care Needs of Diverse Populations](#)

Additional sources that address healthcare disparities

- ❑ **National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Reports**, a collection of the annual reports that track disparities related to the quality of and access to healthcare, published by AHRQ.
[National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Reports](#)
- ❑ **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 (IOM).
[Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care](#)

Note:

Publication of these resources is not a promise or guarantee of coverage. Your CarePlus-covered patients should review their Evidence of Coverage for detailed information.

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REFERENCES:

- 1 [Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care](#)
- 2 [Race, Ethnicity, Culture, and Disparities in Health care](#)