

Understanding Cultural Competency and the Americans with Disabilities Act

Awareness of cultural competency and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements has been shown to help care providers improve overall care by creating stronger personal connections with their patients.



Cultural Competency

Cultural competence is a set of behaviors, attitudes and policies that enable positive interactions in cross-cultural situations.

- **Culture** refers to patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious or social groups.
- **Competence** is the capacity to function effectively as an individual or organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors and needs presented by people and their communities.

Why is Cultural Competency Important?

Health care services that are respectful of and responsive to the beliefs, practices, and cultural and linguistic needs of patients can help improve health outcomes.

Care Provider Requirements

As part of their UnitedHealthcare Community Plan participation agreement, participating care providers are required to treat UnitedHealthcare Community Plan members in their offices as they do non-UnitedHealthcare Community Plan members, and agree not to discriminate in the treatment of or quality of services provided to UnitedHealthcare Community Plan members.

Care providers should be willing and able to make distinctions between treatment methods consistent with the member's cultural background and maintain consistency in providing quality care across a variety of cultures.

Promoting Cultural Competency

- **Support health literacy:** Communicate clearly, slow down the pace of the conversation and use simple words to explain the situation.
- **Conduct a cultural self-assessment** of your practice.
- **Be conscious** of the dynamics when people from different cultures interact.
- **Institutionalize cultural knowledge** among your staff by making it part of your group's policies and practices.
- **Adapt service delivery** to help meet the diverse needs of patients.



UnitedHealthcare Community Plan Resources

Language Interpretation Line (available for some health plans)

- Care providers can use this service for translation needs. Please confirm availability with your state's UnitedHealthcare Community Plan Administrative Guide.

Cultural Competency Library

- [UHCommunityPlan.com > For Health Care Professionals > select a state > Cultural Competency Library](#)

Care Provider Training

- Please ask your Physician Advocate for details.



Americans with Disability Act (ADA)

The ADA is a federal civil rights law for people with disabilities. It covers employment, state and local government services and public accommodations, as well as telecommunications for the deaf. The ADA helps remove barriers that may prevent qualified individuals with disabilities from enjoying the same opportunities available to those without disabilities.

Why is the ADA Important?

Research has shown that when architectural, accessibility and/or language barriers exist for members seeking care, it has a negative impact on the member's health. The ADA helps all individuals receive the same quality health care services, regardless of disabilities.

Care Provider Requirements

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan and our care providers must comply with the ADA by:

- Delivering services that accommodate the needs of members.
- Demonstrating compliance with the ADA by conducting an independent survey or site review of facilities for both physical and programmatic accessibility.
- Reasonably accommodating members and ensuring that programs and services are as accessible to an individual with disabilities as they are to an individual without disabilities — whether through written policies and procedures or by removing barriers to covered services for individuals with disabilities.



If you have questions, please contact your Physician Advocate.



External Resources

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

- Health Literacy Measurement Tools in English and Spanish: ahrq.gov > [For Professionals](#) > [Quality & Patient Safety](#) > [Quality Measure Tools & Resources](#) > [Tools & Resources](#)
- AHRQ Cultural and Linguistic Competency: ahrq.gov/health-care-information/topics/topic-cultural-competence.html

Americans with Disability Act:

- ada.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Health Literacy for Public Health Professionals: www2a.cdc.gov/TCEOnline/registration/detailpage.asp?res_id=2074

National Resource Center on Advancing Emergency Preparedness for Culturally Diverse Communities

- diversitypreparedness.org

Think Cultural Health

- thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health

- Center for Linguistic and Cultural Competency in Health Care: minorityhealth.hhs.gov > [Cultural Competency](#) > [Center for Linguistic and Cultural Competency in Health Care](#)
- A Patient-Centered Guide to Implementing Language Access Services in Healthcare Organizations: minorityhealth.hhs.gov/Assets/pdf/Checked/HC-LSIG.pdf