

# FAMILY VOICES<sup>®</sup>

National Center for  
Family Professional Partnerships



## PROMISING PRACTICES IN CULTURAL COMPETENCE: Texas Children's Health Plan (TEXAS)

### TEXAS CHILDREN'S HEALTH PLAN

Texas Children's Health Plan (TCHP) is the nation's first health maintenance organization (HMO) created just for children, and provides health insurance coverage for children, teens, pregnant women, and adults, through a statewide network of more than 1,100 providers, 3,200 specialists, and 60 hospitals throughout the state. Each month, TCHP serves over 10,000 Texans by providing education and self-management skills, as well as to making connections in the community to support family wellness.

Viewing overall good health from a holistic perspective, TCHP strives to deliver patient-centered care that recognizes the complex relationships between health and factors like housing, community support, and access to resources like healthy food and green space.

### TEXAS COMMUNITIES

As of 2012, more than half of the population of Texas was comprised of minorities, with Hispanics representing the largest group. Over 30% of the state's population speaks Spanish as their primary language. Other languages spoken in the state include Vietnamese, Chinese, and Urdu.

This brief provides information on how TCHP exemplifies promising practices that address important elements of providing culturally competent services. Based on feedback collected from a series of focus groups organized by Family Voices National Center for Family/Professional Partnerships, five essential elements have been identified as benchmarks for an organization's cultural competence and for reaching and serving culturally and ethnically diverse families. Although a community's needs and desires are often unique and specific, the following are intended to serve as inspiration or a starting point for other organizations seeking to build greater cultural competency and create a more welcoming and accessible environment for their clients and communities.

### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS:

#### Provision of language access:

- Customer service representatives can speak Spanish or English and interpreter services are available for 140 languages.
- Interpreters are available for doctor's visits as well as home visits.
- Several parent support groups are facilitated by Spanish-speaking nurses.
- TCHP provides interpretation during events via headphone for families or individuals who speak languages other than Spanish or English..
- A language line provides interpretation in over 130 languages.

- All materials, including the TCHP website are available in English and Spanish, with other translations available online through TCHP's partnership with Krames.
- A *Reach Out and Read* program provides books in English and Spanish for providers to share with members.

**Office environments reflect the diversity of families:**

- Printed materials reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of people served by TCHP.
- Clients and families are greeted by bilingual staff who are available to help navigate the healthcare system.
- All printed materials are written at a 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level for ease of access and understanding.

**Staff and partnerships reflect diverse populations:**

- All of TCHP's Customer Service Department's Member Service Advocates speak English and Spanish.
- Staff are regularly trained and assessed for cultural competency and language skills.
- TCHP staff have access to Spanish classes to improve language proficiency.
- TCHP partners with a variety of agencies and community organizations, including the March of Dimes, Greater Houston Interpreters Association, local libraries, the University of Houston, and the Families CAN Project.
- Community Liaisons attend community events.
- TCHP reaches out to families through web, billboards, newsletters, and printed materials on grocery store bulletin boards.

**Connecting families to other families with shared experiences & similar backgrounds:**

- Special programs and events for families include parent-to-parent conferences, community-based support groups for parents, yearly transition planning seminars, a teen transition event held at Dave and Buster's, and other seasonal events.
- TCHP hosts an annual Parent-to-Parent conference intended to provide information and facilitate connections between parents and families with similar experiences and challenges

**Providing opportunities for diverse families to share their opinions and feedback:**

- TCHP holds focus groups led by the marketing department to evaluate new materials.
- An outside company performs a survey of 5,000 participants to assess the value and quality of materials.
- The Cultural and Linguistic Competence self-assessment tool is used to assess TCHP.
- TCHP's Language Access Plan is reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure it meets the needs of the changing population.

**LESSONS LEARNED:**

TCHP understands that language is one of the most significant barriers to accessing healthcare and is committed to ensuring members can speak with someone in their own language.

While most of TCHP's members speak either English or Spanish, because of the variety of other languages spoken in the state, language lines and interpreters are used as needed.

**STEPS FOR SUCCESS**

- Provide materials and support in the languages of the people served.
- Hire bilingual staff, and partner with other organizations and interpreter services for additional language support.
- Reach out to the community through a variety of printed resources available throughout the community.

**WHAT FAMILIES SAY:**

"I had the opportunity to mingle and network with parents and children with special needs such as myself. The meetings had refreshments and childcare provisions. They also provided forms for all the families in different languages."- *Abim Jones, Parent*

"We were in a class with at least eight other families from different language and family backgrounds... This helped us to know that we're not alone". *Parent of Eliseo Gonzalez*