



Resources to Help Health Plans Meet Communication Accessibility Requirements and Population Needs

This document summarizes existing policy translations, guidance and planning resources, trainings, and toolkits that may aid health plans and provider organizations in addressing communication accessibility for individuals living with visual, auditory, speech, or cognitive disabilities, as well as those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

i Policy Translation

Communication accessibility provisions can be found in several regulations addressing nondiscrimination requirements for health plans, providers, systems, state and local governments, and organizations. This section summarizes information from the United States Department of Health and Human Services that may inform health plan and provider organizations' understanding or operationalization of legal obligations for meeting communication accessibility requirements. This is not an exhaustive list of resources and should not be considered an alternative or replacement for official regulations, contractual obligations, or organizational goals relevant to communication accessibility.

- **Guidance on Nondiscrimination in Telehealth: Federal Protections to Ensure Accessibility to People with Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Persons** (2022). Available at <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/guidance-on-nondiscrimination-in-telehealth.pdf>.
- **Know the Rights that Protect Individuals with Disabilities from Discrimination** (2022). Available at <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/knowyourrights504adafactsheet.pdf>.
- **Section 1557 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act** (2023). Available at <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/section-1557/index.html>.
- **Section 1557: Ensuring Meaningful Access for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency** (2016). Available at <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/section-1557/fs-limited-english-proficiency/index.html>.
- **What is Section 504 and how does it relate to Section 508?** (2015). Available at <https://www.hhs.gov/web/section-508/what-is-section-504/index.html>.

This additional resource from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Civil Rights Division offers guidance on communication accessibility requirements for all health care organizations that provide services to the public.

Resources to Help Health Plans Meet Communication Accessibility Requirements and Population Needs

- **ADA Requirements: Effective Communication** (2020). Available at <https://www.ada.gov/resources/effective-communication/>.

Guidance and Planning

This resource outlines organizational strategies, workflow and product development approaches, and tactical best practices for health plans to consider in the design of communication accessibility policies and processes. It also includes guidance on meeting web content accessibility standards.

- **Communications Accessibility for Individuals with Disabilities Best Practices for Medicare Health and Part D Prescription Drug Plans** (2019). U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Guidance Portal. Available at <https://www.hhs.gov/guidance/document/communications-accessibility-individuals-disabilities>.

These resources are intended to support organizations in assessing current practices, developing plans, and implementing accessible services for individuals living with disabilities.

- **Communication and Interaction Challenges for Autistic Adults** (2019). Resources for Integrated Care. Available at https://www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/DCC_Communication_and_Interaction_Challenges_for_Autistic_Adults_resource_document.pdf.
- **Improving Communication Access for Individuals Who are Blind or have Low Vision** (2022). Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Office of Minority Health (OMH). Available at <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/omh-visual-sensory-disabilities-brochure-508c.pdf>.
- **Improving Communication Access for Individuals Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing** (2022). CMS OMH. Available at <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/audio-sensory-disabilities-brochure-508c.pdf>.

This website features information, continuing education opportunities, resources, and more for health and health care professionals to learn about culturally and linguistically appropriate services, or CLAS. Featured resources include the National Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services Standards and associated materials, as well as other tools related to developing communication skills, understanding communication styles, and effectively using communication assistance services.

- **Think Cultural Health** (n.d.). U.S. Department of Health & Human Services OMH. Available at <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/>.

These resources focus on addressing a broad range of accessibility issues (e.g., inclusive of physical disabilities and Limited English Proficiency), and also offer frameworks, guidance, or actionable tools that may be applicable or adaptable to addressing communication accessibility.

- **Disability-Competent Care Self-paced Training Assessment Review Tool (DCC-START) Resource Guide** (n.d.). Resources for Integrated Care. Available at https://www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/DCC-START_Resource_Guide_0.pdf.

Resources to Help Health Plans Meet Communication Accessibility Requirements and Population Needs

- **Inventory of Resources for Standardized Demographic and Language Data Collection** (2022). CMS OMH. Available at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/OMH/Downloads/Data-Collection-Resources.pdf>.
- **Language Access Planning** (n.d.). DOJ Civil Rights Division. Available at <https://www.lep.gov/language-access-planning>.
- **Modernizing Health Care to Improve Physical Accessibility: A Primer for Providers** (2021). CMS OMH. Available at <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/cmsmodernizinghealthcare.pdf>.

Trainings and Webinars

Training opportunities focused on implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are updated on an ongoing basis through the ADA National Network. The resource below includes the most recent offerings, including trainings on accessible technology, Section 508, and regulations and trends.

- **ADA Training** (2023). ADA National Network, Administration for Community Living, and the University of Illinois at Chicago Department of Disability and Human Development. Available at <https://www.accessibilityonline.org/training>.

This course offers solutions for increasing the physical accessibility of health care settings and services for people with disabilities. Health plan staff are eligible to sign up for Medicare Learning Network (MLN) training and complete this course.

- **Modernizing Health Care to Improve Physical Accessibility** (2021). CMS MLN. Available at <https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/MLN/WBT/MLN9033809-Physical-Accessibility/OMHPA/omh-modernizing-healthcare/index.html>.

The following Resources for Integrated Care webinars cover a range of topics relevant to health plans and providers seeking to support or improve accessible and high-quality care for individuals, caregivers, and their families living with disabilities.

- **Disability-Competent Care Resources on Access** (2019). Available at https://www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com/resource_on_access/?csrt=1533371531949610660.
- **Improving Accessibility in Provider Settings** (2018). Available at https://www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com/accessibility_of_provider_settings/?csrt=7784547922045995192.
- **Understanding the Lived Experience of Disability** (2015). Available at <https://www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com/2015/?csrt=7784547922045995192>.

The Medicare-Medicaid Coordination Office (MMCO) in the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) seeks to help beneficiaries dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid have access to seamless, high-quality health care that includes the full range of covered services in both programs. This resource guide is intended to support health plans and providers in integrating and coordinating care for dually eligible beneficiaries. It does not convey current or anticipated health plan or provider requirements. For additional information, please go to www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com. The list of resources in this guide is not exhaustive. Please submit feedback to RIC@lewin.com.