

## Beacon CT Group Graduates as Part of September 2022 CLAS Cohort

On September 29, 2022, four Beacon CT staff and representatives from seven other organizations graduated from six months of training in Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) standards. Developed by the Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CLAS standards offer a blueprint for organizations to improve the quality of their care and services and to address healthcare disparities.

Beacon CT began implementing CLAS standards in 2015 while participating in the Connecting to Care CLAS cohort. The Connecting to Care initiative is a statewide effort to blend and integrate all child-serving systems in the state into one Network of Care that serves all children and families equally and effectively. At the same time, it aligns the national CLAS standards with DCF's statewide racial justice framework.

As graduates of the first cohort of Connecting to Care CLAS Training in 2015, Beacon CT followed the standards' guidelines by forming its own CLAS Workgroup and developing a Health Equity Plan.

The Workgroup evolved into Beacon CT's Diversity Action Team (DAT) in 2019. This group quickly grew in size and scope to address health inequities among people of color revealed during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also sought to address issues arising from the country's discourse around social justice following George Floyd's death in 2020. In those first years, the DAT focused on developing leadership, including hiring a full-time Director of Diversity and Community Engagement and introducing programs like "Diversity Dialogues" and "Career Connections." These bi-monthly sessions allowed staff to explore diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in a safe space.

With changes in personnel and new methods for demonstrating the program's impact, it became essential to have DAT leadership undergo CLAS training once again. As a result, the group's focus will expand to address our members and our communities, exploring areas such as Beacon's translation and interpreter capabilities and reviewing marketing materials and outreach strategies to ensure cultural and linguistic equity. The Beacon CT DAT team will report on its developments as they unfold.