

Culturally Connected Care: KDHE's CLAS for Building a Diverse and Culturally Competent Workforce and Environment



Jade Ramsdell, MBA, LSSGB, CDP®: Performance Improvement Director, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Alix Guerrero: Program Manager-Strategic Initiatives, Kansas Department of Health and Environment | Kelcia Thornton, MA, MHA: CLAS Specialist, Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Issue

As Kansas becomes more culturally and linguistically diverse, research underscores the vital need for language access services to ensure the highest attainable health outcomes for our communities. Language barriers pose a substantial threat to the well-being of Kansans, particularly those disproportionately affected by COVID-19, including high-risk and underserved populations like racial and ethnic minorities and rural communities. Language barriers, among other factors, can detrimentally impact the health of marginalized groups within our state. With the increasing presence of non-English languages in our state, the inadequate culturally and linguistically appropriate services have a progressively detrimental effect on the health of Kansans.

Many health care systems across various states found themselves overwhelmed by the surge in COVID-19 cases, and many communities expressed frustrations with cross-cultural communication amidst these chaotic conditions. Nevertheless, it is precisely during these demanding times that skills in cultural competency are most critical, playing a crucial role in addressing disparities across states and improving health care outcomes. In Kansas, 11.8% of the households in Kansas reported speaking a non-English language at home as their primary shared language (Source: Kansas Health Matters).

Project

In its expansion efforts, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) embraced the National Center for Cultural Competence's key principles:

- 1. Core Values:** Demonstrating consistent values for effective cross-cultural interactions.
- 2. Building Capacity:** Developing skills for diversity appreciation, self-assessment, cultural knowledge acquisition, and adaptability.
- 3. Integration:** Incorporating these principles into all organizational aspects, including policy development, administration, practice, and community engagement.

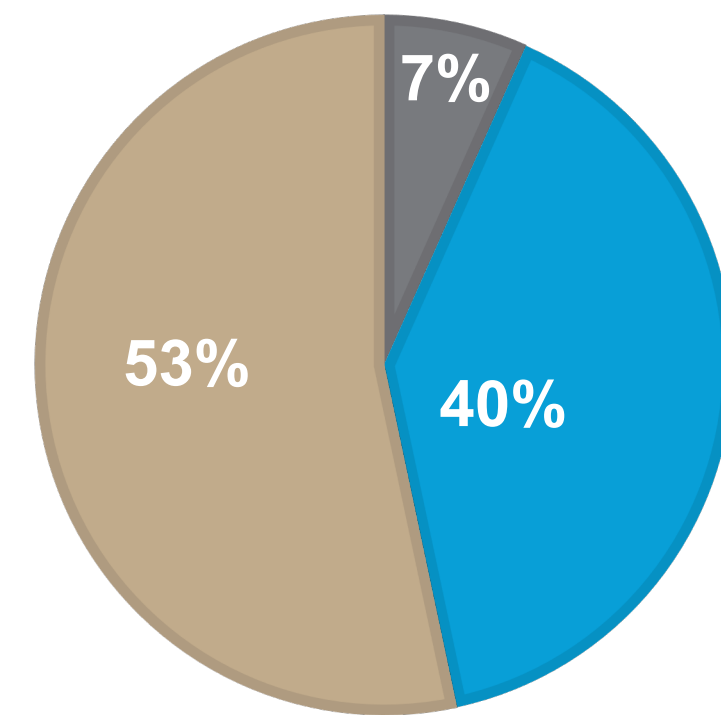
In 2022, KDHE launched an Enhanced Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) program. It commenced with a department policy aimed at addressing the social, cultural, and linguistic needs of the communities it serves. Rooted in the enhanced National Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, KDHE's policy guides employees in implementing all 15 Standards for culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services, officially approved in January 2023.

One notable CLAS program improvement is the KDHE's exclusive translation funding program initiated in June 2023. It allocates funds for translation needs across all KDHE Divisions and Offices on a first-come, first-served basis. This funding covers program material and website translation, language line support, and event interpreters. It ensures material accessibility and helps with budget allocation for translation and interpretation as standard procedure.

Results

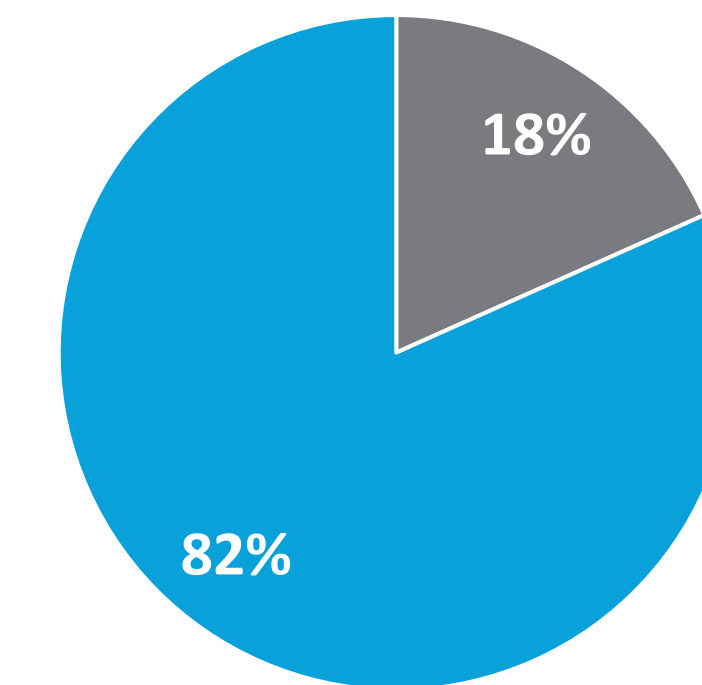
STATUS OF CLAS STANDARDS ADDRESSED AT KDHE THROUGH ENHANCED PROGRAM (TOTAL=15)

■ Not Started ■ In Progress/Ongoing ■ Completed

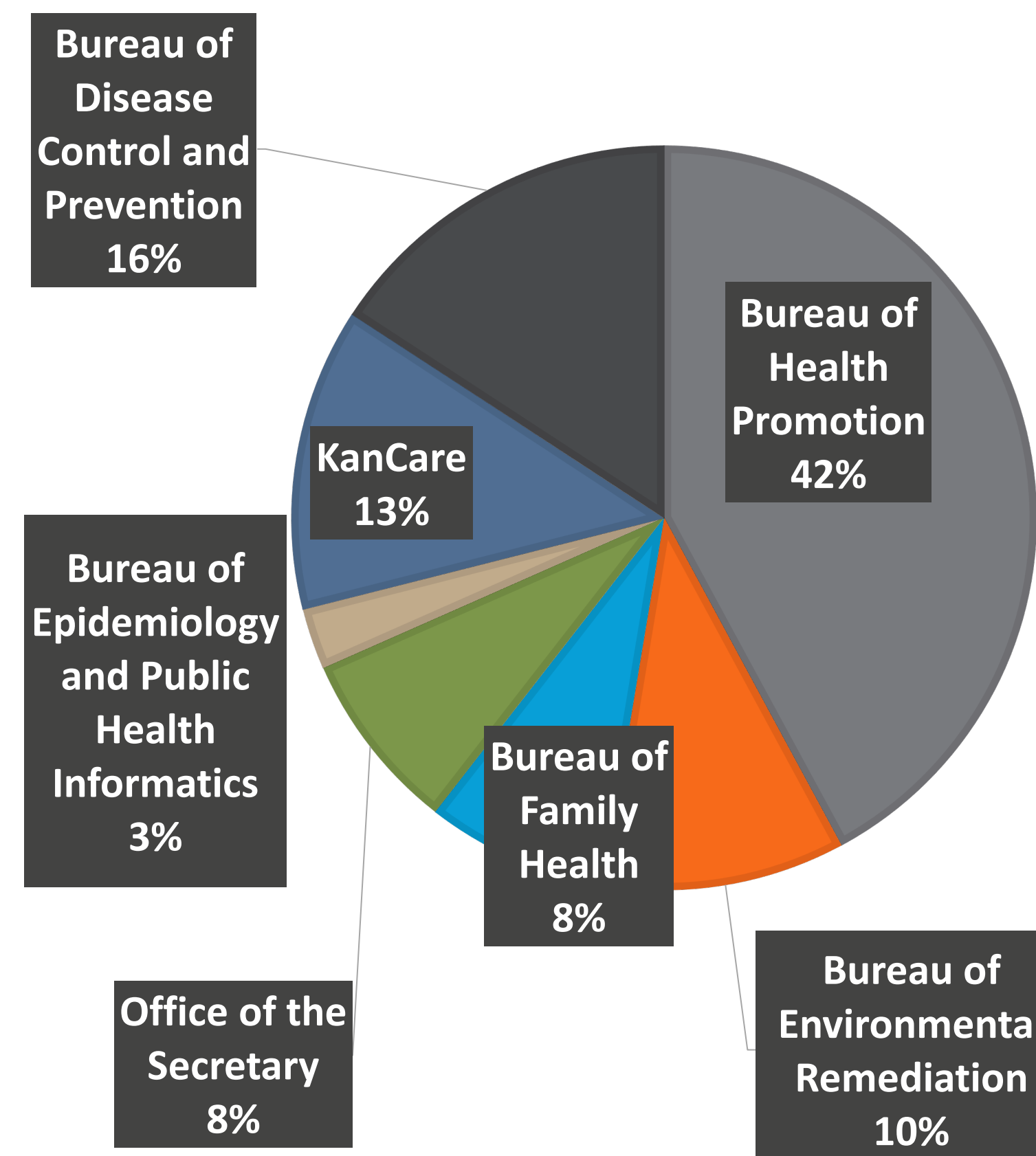


KDHE COMMUNICATION PRODUCT REQUESTS (TOTAL=556) JANUARY 2023- MAY 2023

■ Translation Requests ■ Total Requests



OF CONTRACTED TRANSLATED MATERIALS THROUGH CLAS FUNDING PROGRAMS BY BUREAU (TOTAL=38)



The department's language translation efforts for Kansans have progressed, covering 11 different languages, including indigenous languages like K'iche, spoken in Guatemala and various Kansas communities. These languages include:

1. Arabic
2. Burmese
3. Somali
4. Spanish
5. Vietnamese
6. French Creole
7. Haitian Creole
8. Ukrainian
9. Russian
10. Tagalog
11. K'iche

Lessons Learned

- Placing community engagement at the core of CLAS and health equity efforts strengthens partnerships, deepens understanding, and advances health while reducing disparities for thriving communities.
- Evaluating our baseline is crucial due to limited initial knowledge about cultural competence, aiding ongoing measurement and quality improvement.
- Maintaining staff continuity and relevant training is vital for our CLAS objectives' sustainability.

Organization Information

KDHE aims to enhance the health and environment of all Kansans.

The Center for Performance Management (CPM) at KDHE strives for high performance and continuous quality improvement. It involves staff, governing bodies, external partners, and communities to improve programs using data, budgeting, and monitoring. KDHE takes responsibility for achieving meaningful results through performance management.

Contact

Jade Ramsdell
785-213-6462
Jade.M.Ramsdell@ks.gov

Kelcia Thornton
785-480-0911
Kelcia.Thornton@ks.gov