

**SOCIAL & CULTURAL BARRIERS**  
Program Year 2010

**GOAL: To reduce social and cultural barriers to accessing health and health care for racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities in New Hampshire”**

The Endowment for Health believes that all of New Hampshire’s residents should have access to health and health care, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or the language they speak. Language and differences in cultural practices and beliefs present some of the greatest access barriers for patients as well as challenges for health care providers. Overcoming these barriers, creating equal access and quality health care for all of New Hampshire’s people is critical. This requires a commitment to strengthen our cross-cultural communication skills and improve social inclusion for all. It also requires us to understand and address the systemic influences on social and cultural barriers to health and employ strategies that remove these barriers. Such strategies include the development of new models of culturally effective health care, diversification of the health workforce, empowerment of vulnerable populations, transformative dialogue, public policy advocacy and data collection.



**Investment to date: \$5,599,296**  
**Number of grants to date: 138**

**Theme Outcomes**

- Increased access to culturally and linguistically appropriate health-related organizations and services for racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities
- Improved cultural effectiveness of health care organizations and professionals
- Increased social inclusion and social connectedness for racial and ethnic minorities in New Hampshire’s communities
- Improved state, local, and organizational policies that enhance the health and well-being of racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities

**Theme Strategies**

- Increase consumer and provider awareness about legal rights and responsibilities regarding health care access for racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities
- Develop, pilot, and disseminate innovative models of culturally effective health care
- Develop, pilot and disseminate sustainable and effective community-based models to connect racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities to health services
- Expand and enhance the bicultural and bilingual health workforce
- Increase mutual understanding that strengthens community within and across racial, ethnic and linguistic minority communities and between these minorities and members of the majority community
- Conduct and disseminate applied research and promote collection of data to improve policy and enhance the delivery of care
- Strengthen leadership capacity and advocacy skills within community organizations led by and serving ethnic, racial and linguistic minorities
- Identify and advocate for policy issues related to reducing health disparities and improving integration

## Overall Progress

In Program Year 2009, the Endowment refocused the theme specifically to address the social and cultural factors that create barriers to health and health care for racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities. The following are specific examples of the progress we are making in achieving our outcomes:

### Increasing social inclusion and social connectedness

- Through supportive places and programs for young people of diverse cultures to interact, cross-cultural friendships and a culture of acceptance are being created. In addition, the most isolated refugee youth are benefiting from programs that promote mental health and well-being by strengthening their English skills and academic performance while offering social supports.
- A statewide humanities project is stimulating thoughtful dialogue about immigrant integration and social inclusion among people of diverse cultures.

### Increasing access to culturally and linguistically appropriate health care

- A block-scheduling pilot at Southern NH Medical Center has helped to expand the efficiency and effectiveness of medical interpretation for Spanish and Portuguese speaking patients in Nashua.
- Somali women and their families are benefiting from case management, interpretation, health education and cultural competency training for health professionals provided by a female Somali health educator.

### Improving the cultural effectiveness of health care providers

- An effort is currently underway to examine the pool of foreign-trained health workers in New Hampshire and to identify ways to help overcome barriers that inhibit them from practicing in their health care field.
- Conferences and peer support networks have provided health professionals with exposure to best practice innovations. At a two-day symposium health and human service providers examined local data and culturally appropriate mental health interventions for refugee families.
- The Medical Interpretation Advisory Board (MIAB) continues to promote expanded access to linguistically appropriate health care through efforts related to advocacy, workforce development, data collection and finance.

### Improving state, local and organizational policies

- The Gate City Immigrant Integration Initiative is improving the way city agencies and nonprofit service providers offer supports to immigrants and refugees in Nashua.
- Through a public-private partnership, the Endowment, the NH Office of Minority Health and University of NH are beginning to develop a *State Plan to Address Disparities and Promote Health Equity*.
- Current policy efforts are focused on expanding and improving communication access for persons who are Limited English Proficient and Deaf or Hard of Hearing at state agencies.

## Current Funding Interests

The Endowment is particularly interested in:

- Efforts to improve the collection and utilization of race, ethnicity and language data throughout the health care system.
- Research and reports that document health disparities and explore the underlying social determinants and systemic causes of health inequity for racial and ethnic minorities in New Hampshire.
- Projects that work to improve public policy to reduce racial and ethnic disparities and to expand communication access within all of the state's health-related agencies.
- Strategies to expand the bicultural, bilingual workforce by addressing barriers that inhibit foreign-trained health workers from joining the health care workforce and that cultivate health careers among minority youth.
- Efforts to improve the provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health and family support services for racial, ethnic and language minorities.

The Program Director for the Social & Cultural Barriers theme is Kelly Laflamme at [KLafamme@endowmentforhealth.org](mailto:KLafamme@endowmentforhealth.org) or (603) 228-2448, Endowment for Health, 14 South St., Concord, NH 03301. A listing of Endowment Social & Cultural Barriers grants is available at [www.endowmentforhealth.org](http://www.endowmentforhealth.org)