

Cultural competency in diverse populations

Prestige Health Choice (Prestige) strives to provide health care in a respectful, understandable, and effective manner, to an increasingly diverse population.

What is cultural competency?

Cultural competency is a set of congruent attitudes, skills, behaviors, and policies that enable organizations and staff to work effectively in multicultural environments. It reflects the ability to acquire and use knowledge of health-related beliefs, attitudes, practices, and communication patterns of patients and their families to improve health care services, health outcomes, and reduce health disparities.

Why do we strive for cultural competency?

The increasing population growth of racial and ethnic communities and linguistic groups, each with their own cultural traits and health profiles, presents a challenge to the health care industry. Both the provider and patient bring their individual learned patterns of language and culture to the health care experience, which must be transcended to achieve equal access and quality health care. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, about 18 percent of the population over age five speaks a language other than English in the home. Here in Florida, the trend is very similar. Because of the continued growth in immigration, high poverty rates and low literacy levels in Florida, it is imperative that health care organizations design and implement culturally appropriate services that meet the basic health care needs of an increasingly diverse population.

Our commitment to culturally competent health care

Prestige recognizes the existence of deep-rooted disparities and bias in the medical industry, as well as the need for health care that more effectively connects with a diverse and multicultural patient population. As a result, Prestige established its Cultural Competency Program in 2008 to ensure all health plan members, regardless of their culture, country of origin, language, race or ethnicity, can access quality health care services. We recognize that it is our responsibility, along with that of our extensive provider network, to ensure that health-related information and services are tailored to meet the unique needs of our diverse membership.

To support this effort we offer interpretive services at no cost to our members. This service provides a fast and easy way to communicate with our limited English proficiency members. Through this service, our members have access to interpreters in more than 200 languages who are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Please call Member Services at **1-855-355-9800** to access this free service.

Updating provider demographics

If there have been any changes to the information listed below, please contact your network representative or Provider Services at **1-800-617-5727**.

- Office phone number.
- Office addresses.
- Hours of operation.
- Acceptance of new patients.

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1-866-833-9718
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Postpartum visits

As a reminder, Prestige has an expanded benefit for postpartum visits associated with Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) code **59430**, which allows additional postpartum visits within 90 days of a delivery. This allowance for additional visits should enable members to be seen for at least one visit between the critical days 21 and 42 of the postpartum period, which is an Agency for Health Care Administration quality performance measure.

What is health literacy?

Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions. Health literacy has a direct impact on health outcomes, as well as health care spending, and is estimated to cost the United States health care system between \$50 billion to \$73 billion yearly.

According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 36 percent of adults have a basic or below-basic level of health literacy. Basic or below-basic health literacy signifies increased difficulties interacting with health care providers, following clinical direction, engaging in preventive care through self-management or illness prevention, and navigating through the health care system to find proper support. Other studies revealed that 26 percent of people did not understand when their next appointment was scheduled, 42 percent did not understand how to take medication on an empty stomach, and to up 78 percent misinterpret warnings on prescription labels.

Addressing low health literacy

If providers observe warning signs that lead them to suspect low health literacy is an issue, they are encouraged to take the following actions to help engage patients in their own care and improve health outcomes:

- **Avoid medical terminology.** Use easy-to-understand plain language and phrases when discussing health conditions and treatment options, such as the examples in the table below.



Medical Term	Plain Language
Contraception	Birth control
Hypertension	High blood pressure
Referral	Send you to another doctor
Radiology department	X-ray department

- **Do not overload the patient with information.** Instead of going into great detail, which can be overwhelming and confusing, focus on the most important big-picture issues, reiterating key points and phrases to improve comprehension and retention.
- **Employ the teach-back method.** Respectfully explain to patients that you want to make sure they have all the information they need and understand your instructions. Do this by asking questions such as, “Can you explain to me how you will take your medicine?” or, “What will you tell your family about your condition when you get home?” The most important thing is getting patients to repeat the key medical information by engaging in a dialogue that is comfortable for you and patients. Repeat and clarify as necessary.
- **Incorporate more visual aids.** Pictures, diagrams, and models are effective for showing patients what you are trying to explain.
- **Utilize Prestige as a resource.** If you have patients struggling with health literacy, you can refer them to Prestige’s Rapid Response and Outreach Team at **1-855-371-8072**. Case managers can help provide members with more information about their medical conditions, offer medication reminders, and follow up regarding their appointments or tests. In addition, case managers can help them connect to other beneficial community resources and translation services.

Source: Weiss, Barry D. M.D.; “Health Literacy and Patient Safety: Help Patients Understand”; Second Edition; American Medical Association Foundation; www.ama-assn.org/resources/doc/ama-foundation/healthlitclinicians.pdf, 2007