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California Community Colleges



# Strategies for Building Culturally and Linguistically Accessible Healthcare Pathway Programs

ELL Healthcare Pathways Technical Assistance  
Webinar #1, December 3, 2025



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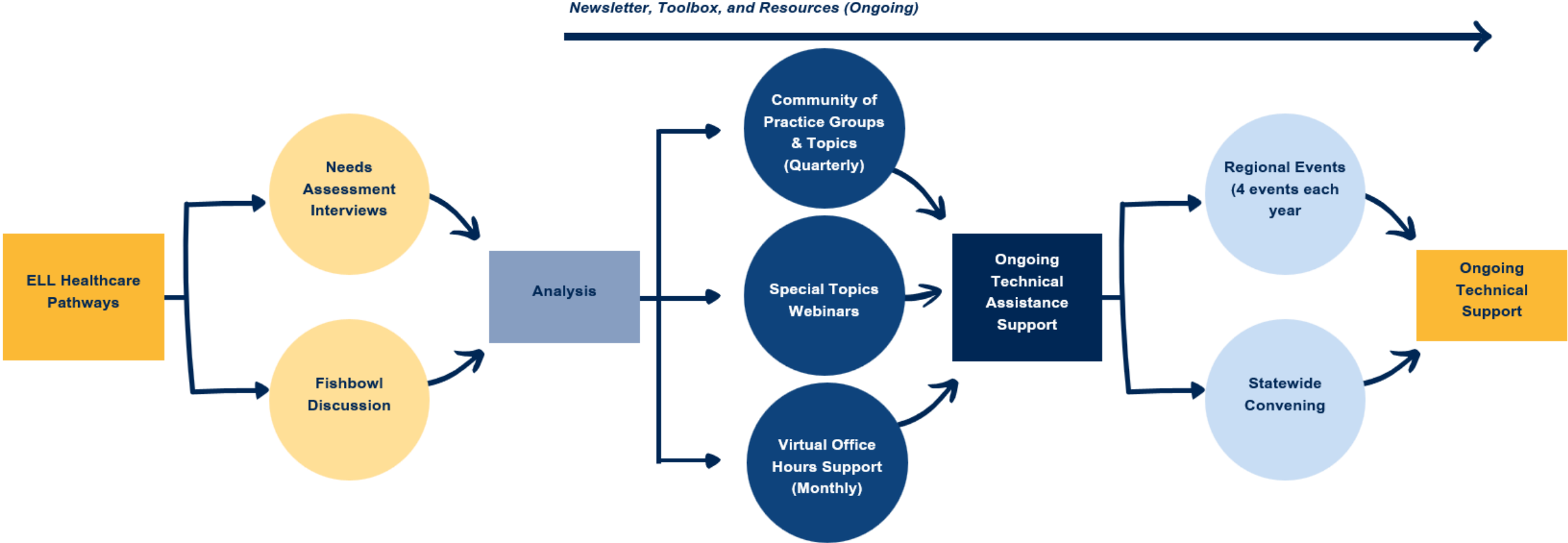
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# Technical Assistance Timeline





## Who Are We?

The **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** is a global humanitarian organization that was founded in 1933. Today, IRC has offices in 30 US cities (including 6 in California) and 40+ countries. In the U.S., the IRC supports new Americans with educational and empowerment services.

IRC's ***Economic Empowerment Technical Unit*** provides technical assistance across multiple areas including:

- ✓ *Workforce Development*
- ✓ *Adult Education*
- ✓ *Cultural & Linguistic Accessibility*
- ✓ *Curriculum & Program Design*

In 2024, the IRC's Economic Empowerment Technical Unit provided **external technical assistance** and capacity-building to 100+ organizations.



# Insights & Reflections from Needs Assessment Interviews and CAEP Summit Presentation

- Healthcare Pathway programs are **popular** and are seeing an **increasingly diverse** group of new American participants
- There is a need to ensure opportunities are **culturally and language-accessible for a diverse immigrant community**
- **Some participants have medical backgrounds but lack English – Noncredit bridge programming** unlocks access
- **Dynamic immigration context** impacting some students
- **Strong partnerships** with a culture of shared outcomes are critical for success.
- **Starting new programs is hard** – multi-faceted process that simply takes time



# **Best Practices in Culturally and Linguistically Accessible Programming**

# Understanding the New American Experience

## **Your students may have experienced:**

- ✓ Dangerous journeys
- ✓ Exposure to violence & abuse
- ✓ Smugglers & human trafficking
- ✓ Exploitation
- ✓ Detention

## **Now they may face new challenges:**

- ✓ Learning a new language & culture
- ✓ Navigating complex immigration procedures
- ✓ A dynamic immigration context
- ✓ Difficulty in finding employment & housing
- ✓ Mental and physical health challenges
- ✓ Separation from family



# What is Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching?

**Watch the video:**

[Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning](#)





# Best Practices in Culturally and Linguistically Accessible Programming

- Center diverse voices and experiences
- Adopt a strengths-based approach
- Provide linguistically and culturally accessible materials
- Use a trauma-informed approach
- Foster community building





# Center Diverse Voices and Experiences



## Why We Do It

- To empower students, give them a voice, and help them connect with what they're learning in class.
- To strengthen our programs by allowing for a broader range of ideas
- To build trust and understanding between these communities, educational institutions, and employers



## How We Do It

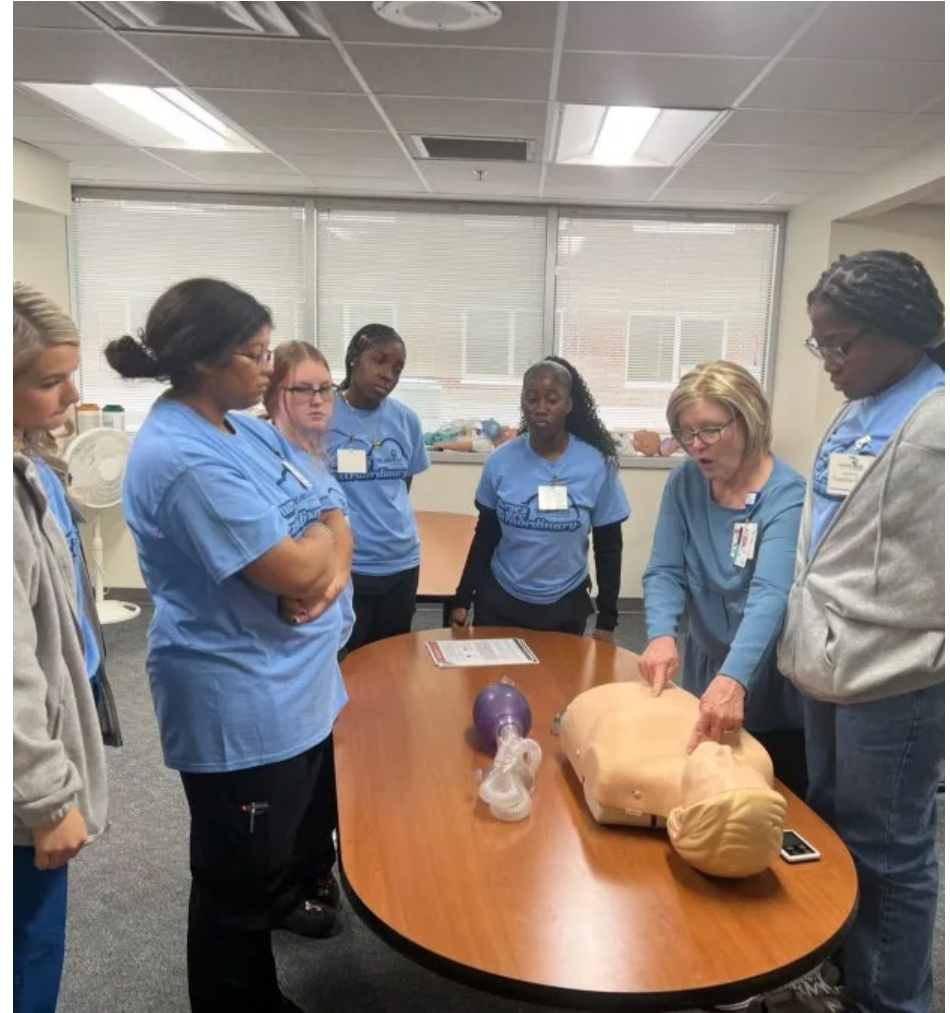
- Regularly gather student feedback on programs and services, and use their input to make improvements.
- Make sure students from different backgrounds have their voices included in program design and in classroom discussions and decisions
- Including input from diverse communities. Being culturally appropriate is not just about language. It also means making sure cultural context and nuances are explained accurately, and that people's cultural beliefs and values are respected.



## Examples

- Student feedback surveys
- Student advisory councils
- Focus group discussions
- Workshops and community stakeholder events
- Needs assessments
- In-class activities that address diverse learning styles and needs
- Inviting guest speakers who share the students' background

# Examples of Activities that Center Diverse Voices and Experiences





# Adopt a Strengths-Based Approach

**What is it?** Focus on people's strengths and abilities and use them to support personal growth, learning, and positive results instead of only looking at problems.



## Why We Do It

- To motivate students and show them how they can take charge of their learning and future.
- Accentuate the positive and build confidence
- Create an environment for individuals to thrive



## How We Do It

- Learning about individual students' experiences and barriers
- Identifying individual needs and connecting them to resources
- Focus on students developing their own plans and goals for their work and education
- High standards, but with supports
- Coaching over counseling



## Examples

- Coaching and guidance that help students understand their strengths and weaknesses and set goals that focus on their strengths.
- Empowering students with resources rather than gatekeeping
- Giving extra in-class help, like vocabulary lists and outlines, to support ELL students.





# Provide Linguistically and Culturally Accessible Materials



## Why We Do It

- To increase access to programs and services for students from different cultural backgrounds
- To better support students with different English levels in a classroom
- To foster environments that are conducive to learning and support



## How We Do It

- Acknowledging diverse holidays and religious traditions and creating space for these practices
- Respecting and valuing cultural differences
- Including ideas and visits from staff, students, or volunteers from different cultural and language backgrounds.
- Using different ways to explain activities, assignments, timelines, and other important information to students.



## Examples

- Provide access to professional interpretation or translated materials (as needed and appropriate)
- Incorporate culturally relevant examples and images in curriculum
- Use image-heavy materials, as well as audio-visuals
- Create vocabulary handouts for key languages and terminology
- Allow ELLs to use their first language when learning new concepts.

# Implementing Effective Interpretation/Translation



**The goal of my class is for the students to improve their English. Why should I use interpretation or translation?**

- ✓ Even if a student has an intermediate or higher level of fluency in English, it can be difficult to understand the nuances and complexities of what is being said in a new language. Hearing the information in their native language as well as in English can contribute to a fuller understanding.



**I don't speak the students' language. How can I use interpretation/translation?**

- ✓ Phone or internet-based interpretation apps (Google Translate, Apple Translation App, ChatGPT)
- ✓ AI-based in-language notetaking tools/apps (OtterAI, Jamworks)
- ✓ Video-conferencing platform real-time translation tools & PowerPoint voiceover/subtitle tools
- ✓ Volunteers who speak the students' language



**When should I consider using interpretation/translation?**

- ✓ When presenting complex or technical information for the first time
- ✓ When presenting important procedural/technical/scheduling information
- ✓ When explaining grades or assignments



# Best Practices for Using Interpretation/ Translation in the Classroom

- ✓ Avoid jargon, slang, or idioms as much as possible. These types of expressions can be difficult to interpret.
- ✓ If you are using an in-person interpreter, provide slides/materials in advance so they understand the context of the class and any technical vocabulary.
- ✓ Solicit feedback from students and interpreters to confirm comprehension.
- ✓ Pay attention to non-verbal communication. Do students look confused? Does the interpreter look confused?



# Activities that Support Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Teaching



## Acquire cultural knowledge

- ✓ Your cultural lens impacts how you process & learn information.
- ✓ Learn about the cultural background of students in your class.



## Use Language Acquisition Principles

- ✓ Provide language supports for English Language Learners (ELLs).
- ✓ Connect lessons to real life by giving students real-world problems to solve or inviting community members into the classroom.
- ✓ Incorporate interactive and collaborative learning activities that draw from students' prior experiences.
- ✓ Use classroom activities that address different learning styles (visual, audio, kinesthetic).
- ✓ Provide opportunities to work in pairs or small groups.



## Employ Instructional Scaffolds for ELLs

- ✓ Incorporation of vocabulary lists, outlines, audiovisuals as supports.
- ✓ Create context for students.



## Provide Effective Feedback

- ✓ Provide specific actions that will help them improve.



# Scaffolding

An instructional strategy that provides temporary support to students as they develop new skills and understanding, gradually removing that support as they become more competent.

## Scaffolding Tips

- ✓ Reduce the number of objectives/key concepts. Focus on 2-3 key ideas.
- ✓ Provide visuals such as graphic organizers, diagrams, timelines, etc.
- ✓ Provide hands-on exercises, demonstrations, & activities.
- ✓ Provide a study guide or outline before beginning a unit or chapter.
- ✓ Make connections to students' background.



# Use a Trauma-Informed Approach



## Why We Do It

- To understand and respond to the fact that many students may have faced serious trauma or harm.
- To avoid retriggering or causing further trauma or harm
- To provide stabilization, reduce stress, and allow students to focus on learning



## How We Do It

- Create a safe and calm learning environment
- Provide structure and routine to ease anxiety and promote safety
- Empower students by providing choices as often as possible
- Positive reinforcements over negative; create a supportive environment



## Examples

- Give clear directions for activities and assignments so students know what to expect
- Take time to clearly explain systems and rules to reduce stress from cultural and language barriers.
- Set classroom expectations and be consistent



# Foster Community Building



## Why We Do It

- To cultivate resiliency and build community connections
- Foster a sense of belonging and support to combat isolation



## How We Do It

- Provide opportunities for relationship-building between students
- Create connections between students and the organization/ institution/ program
- Develop interactive classroom activities that foster discussion and identify areas of commonality



## Examples

- Hold an activity for the whole class to celebrate a holiday or special event
- Incorporate outside/ community activities where possible
- Create an interactive classroom curriculum where students can learn from each other







**Questions?**



# Contact Us

Do you have questions specific to your program, or need more time to talk through challenges you are having? **CONTACT US** to us to schedule a 1:1 technical assistance session.

IRC Technical

Assistance:

[ELLHCP@rescue.org](mailto:ELLHCP@rescue.org)

WestEd Technical

Assistance:

[ELLHCP@wested.org](mailto:ELLHCP@wested.org)





# New combined logo for ELL Healthcare Pathways Technical Assistance Project!

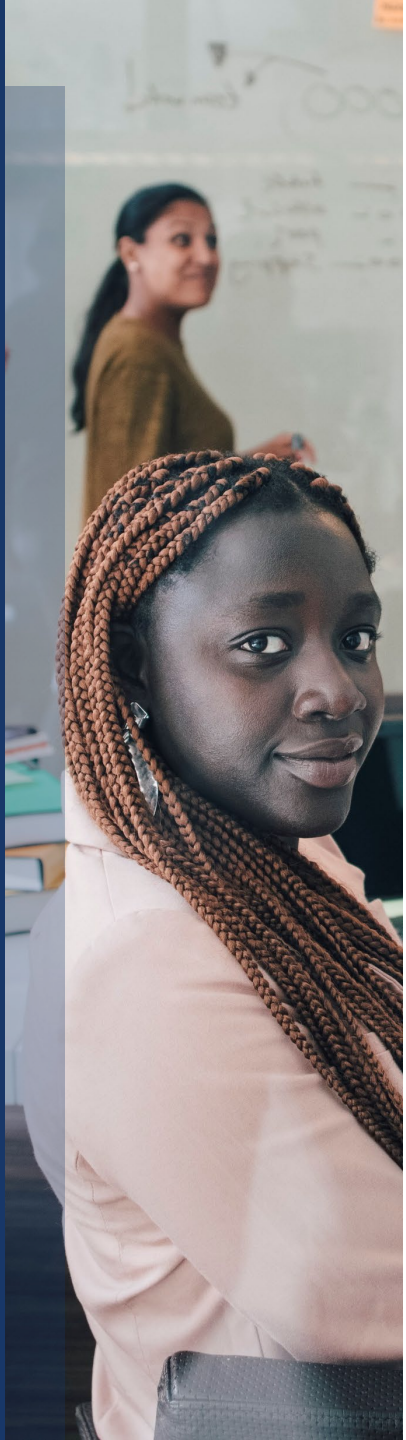


ELL  
Healthcare  
Pathways

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT

# Up Next!

- ✓ **December 18, 2025, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.: *ELL Healthcare Pathways Virtual Open Office Hours***
  - ✓ *Join us for a holiday-themed best practices share-out!*
- ✓ **February 19, 2026, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.: *ELL Healthcare Pathways Community of Practice***
  - ✓ *Join us for an opportunity to learn from and share with other ELL Healthcare Pathways grantees!*



# Additional Resources

## Special Populations

- **Webinar:** [Who are the Afghan Newcomers? Understanding the Background and Socio-cultural Strengths and Needs of Afghan Evacuees to the U.S.](#)
- **Webinar:** [Educational Experiences of Afghans: Learning from Afghan Refugee Students & Families](#)
- **Webinar:** [Hiring Afghan Humanitarian Parolees: What Service Providers and Employers Need to Know](#)
- **Webinar:** [Cultural and Practical Considerations for Working with Ukrainian Clients](#)

## Trauma-informed care

- **Webinar:** [Trauma-informed Care in Case Management](#)
- **Guide:** [Trauma-Informed Care: A Primer for Refugee Service Providers](#)

## Linguistic and cultural accessibility

- **Tool:** [Apps for Translation and Interpretation](#)
- **Guide:** [Implementing the National CLAS Standards for Communication and Language Assistance Services: Lessons from the Field](#)
- **Guide:** [Getting Started With Video and Remote Interpreting](#)
- **Guide:** [Five Resources to Help Newcomers Access Affordable Internet](#)

# Additional Resources, continued

## Linguistic and cultural accessibility

- **Guide:** [Remote JRT Resources for Newcomers](#)
- **Guide:** [Supporting Newcomers Access to Early Childhood Services](#)
- **Guide:** [Cultural Validation and Translation Review Toolkit: Developing Culturally Responsive and Linguistically Accurate Materials](#)
- **Tool:** [Apps for Translation and Interpretation](#)
- **More Resources for Supporting Newcomers on** [Switchboard](#)

## Strengths-based approach

- **Webinar:** [Demystifying Strengths-Based Services to Foster Refugees' Resilience](#)

## Centering client voices

- **Blog:** [The Eight Stages of Co-creation: Tips for Refugee Service Providers on Using Inclusive Approaches in Their Work](#)

## Immigration Resources

- **Guide:** [DHS Guide on Immigration Statuses](#)
- **Guide:** [Talking to Clients Expressing Immigration Enforcement Fears](#)
- **Guide:** [Immigrant Rights Explainer \(ACLU\)](#)