

Collection and Use of Race, Ethnicity, and Language (REL) Data for Health Equity in Connecticut

A Change in the Landscape

Public health data continues to document worse health outcomes for people of color in Connecticut. Understanding and addressing health inequities requires robust and reliable data on patients' race, ethnicity, and language (REL). More granular knowledge of the patient population allows providers to identify REL-related disparities across the care continuum and ensure quality, equitable care. A Connecticut state law (Connecticut Public Act 21-35 Section 11) passed in 2021 mandates that healthcare providers collect and use uniform, granular, self-reported REL data.

The REL Collaborative Learning Network

Providers across the state have been working to understand and align with the new standards. To support this change, the Connecticut Health Foundation, the Yale Equity Research and Innovation Center (ERIC), and the Yale Global Health Leadership Initiative (GHLI) have created a collaborative learning network for healthcare providers. This voluntary network aims to share tools and best practices in REL data collection and use, foster alignment and communication with state agencies, and promote experience sharing and peer support.

Over the past three years, more than 104 dedicated stakeholders from 42 health centers, primary care practices, behavioral health providers, hospitals, and healthcare systems have come together for collaborative change. In Phase I (November 2021 to May 2022) members co-created a statewide [collaborative action plan](#) for implementing PA 21-35. In Phase II (October 2022 to November 2023) members co-developed a [repository of practical tools and resources](#) for (1) leadership engagement and organizational change, (2) community-facing communication, and (3) clinical and IT workflow adjustments in support of the new standards. In Phase III (November 2023 – October 2024), network members continued to connect through monthly, virtual statewide convenings featuring regular updates from OHS on implementation guidance, peer-to-peer sharing, and inspiration for REL data use from within and outside the state. As the network enters Year 4 (Nov 2024 - Oct 2025), the focus will shift toward integrating REL data use more deeply into healthcare practices. The network also offers ad hoc coaching sessions and standing office hours to address questions and connect members with peers and experts for advice.

Engaging New Providers Across the State

In summer 2024, Yale's ERIC and GHLI team, in partnership with OHS and the Connecticut Health Foundation hosted [webinars](#) to guide providers on the new REL data standards. These recordings are available for new providers or those considering joining the network, offering tools and strategies to support effective data collection and use.

Get Involved

If you'd like to learn more or join the REL Network, please contact RELNetwork@yale.edu.