



my language
my care

Language Access Toolkit **for Families**

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Understanding Your Right to Language Access Services

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Language Services and Health Care

What the law requires



Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires recipients of Federal financial assistance to take reasonable steps to make their programs, services, and activities accessible by eligible persons with limited English proficiency.

Your right to language access



You have a right to language access services in the health care setting, no matter what your citizenship status is.

Language access is part of making sure everyone has the health care they need.

Getting Health Care Services in Your Preferred Language

Know Your Rights!

- Is your preferred language a language other than English?
- Do you want to receive medical information in your preferred language?
- Do you want to communicate with your medical provider in your preferred language?

As a patient or caregiver, you have the right to:

1. Communicate with your provider in your preferred language using a certified interpreter
2. Receive all informative documents and forms translated into your preferred language.

It is important to have health information in your preferred language so you can make good decisions about your health or your child's health.



By law, language access services never cost you money.



Understanding Your Right to Language Access Services



Laws that Protect Your Language Access Rights

Language access laws set guidelines for how language services should be provided within organizations that receive federal funding. Below are some laws, executive orders and federal guidelines that help protect language access.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- Protects people with communication disabilities, including vision, hearing or speech disabilities
- Requires signs to announce language access services
- Requires reasonable accommodations to communicate with individuals, such as providing interpreters and access to services for the Deaf and hard of hearing

The Affordable Care Act (ACA)

- Helps to ensure that people whose preferred language is not English have equal access to healthcare
- Section 1557 prohibits healthcare organizations and providers from denying access to services based on race, color, sex, age, disability or national origin, which includes language
- Includes written translation and oral interpretation services

Executive Order 13166

- Agencies are to provide meaningful language services for people whose preferred language is not English
- Entities that receive federal funding are to put in place language access plans to support all requirements of Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

- Makes it illegal for programs that receive federal funds to discriminate against people based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin
- Applies to healthcare agencies and organizations, clinics, and individuals providers who receive federal funding
- Protects people's rights whether they are US citizens or not



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Know Your Rights as a Patient or Caregiver



By law, language access services never cost you money.



You have the right to communicate with your health care provider in your preferred language.

This includes all communications, such as:

- text messages
- phone calls
- conversations with staff and providers
- appointment reminder notifications
- patient portals
- surveys



You have the right to receive information from your health care provider in your preferred language.

This includes any patient forms, medical records, any forms you need to sign, and any forms that explain health care services and what they cost. For example:

- prescription medication instructions
- follow-up visit summaries
- test and lab work results
- signs and brochures available to the public or in the waiting room
- medical diagnoses, procedures, or surgical information



You have the right to feel welcomed and understood, and to be well-informed about your child's care.

Receiving the care your family needs in your preferred language is a right all people have in the United States regardless of nationality, citizenship status, or years spent in the country.



Understanding Your Right to Language Access Services



Types of Interpretation Services

Consecutive Interpretation

Interpreter listens to the speaker, then the speaker pauses and the interpreter delivers the message in the requested or target language.

Used in medical appointments, business related meetings and court hearings.



Simultaneous Interpretation

Interpretation occurs in real time while the speaker is talking.

Used in conferences, government meetings and other events where participants are offered a variety of languages.



Sight Translation

The interpreter converts the content of a written text in one language into spoken language

For example, an interpreter verbally translates the medication instructions written in English to a person in their preferred language



Sign Language

Interpreter converts spoken language into signs.

Sign language is manual communication used by people who are deaf, hard of hearing or nonverbal.



Understanding Your Right to Language Access Services



Asking for Interpreter Services



Communicating with a healthcare provider in your preferred language can help you:

- Communicate your needs, questions, and concerns clearly with medical professionals
- Understand important health information
- Be prepared to make the best decisions about your family and children's health



It's okay to ask. In fact, it's your right.

At first, it might not feel comfortable requesting interpretation services. You might be concerned about stigma, or you might not know what language supports are available.

- Call before your appointment to ask your provider, staff, or receptionist about interpreter services.
- Hospitals and emergency rooms usually have interpretation services available, but it is always a good practice to check in advance.

How to Ask Your Health Care Provider for Interpreter Services

Do you offer interpretation services in-person, by phone, or by video?

How will the interpreter join during the visit?

- You can tell your provider if you prefer to have the interpreter join by video and help them explore options.

How Interpreter Services Might Be Provided

- **In person**, where the interpreter is with the you at an appointment
- **By phone**, where the interpreter is on the phone during your appointment
- **Virtually**, where the interpreter is on video during your appointment
- Using a device that interprets through **artificial intelligence (AI)**



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Understanding Your Right to Language Access Services



Asking for Interpreter Services

Before Your Health Care Visit

Ask how your health care provider or health care system arranges interpretation services.

- When do I need to ask for interpretation services?
- Should I ask for interpretation services during the visit, or do I need to ask these services before a visit?
- What information will I need to give when I ask for interpretation services?

Tell your health care provider how you prefer to work with the interpreter during the health care visit.

- Do you want the interpreter to communicate between you (the parent/guardian) and the health care provider?
- Do you want the interpreter to talk to another family member? Do you want the interpreter to also talk directly to your child (the patient)?
- Do you have other needs or preferences like the gender of the interpreter?

During a Health Care Visit

You have the right to ask for interpretation services to help you during a healthcare visit. An interpreter can help you understand health information, share what you know, and complete tasks that help you participate in your child's care.

How a medical interpreter can help during a health care visit

An interpreter can help you communicate about:

- Your health, your questions, and your concerns
- Your medications or prescriptions
- Services you or your child needs (like therapies, testing, and follow-up appointments)

An interpreter can help understand written materials like:

- Visit forms
- Printed materials
- Visit follow-up summaries
- The patient portal
- Reports and lab work



By law, language access services never cost you money.



Understanding Your Right to Language Access Services



Health Information Portability and Accessibility Act of 1996 (HIPAA)[↗]

The law that protects the privacy of your health information is usually referred to as HIPAA. This federal law protects your health information from being shared without your permission.

Language Access Services and Privacy

Having a medical interpreter can make some families feel concerned about their privacy in a health care visit. It's important to know that your privacy is protected when you are working with a certified medical interpreter.



Certified medical interpreters have to be HIPAA compliant, which means they have to keep your medical information private, just like your health care provider does. Interpreters follow a professional code of ethics that includes maintaining patient confidentiality. They are trained to handle sensitive information discreetly.



Even if you know your medical interpreter from your community, they are required to follow privacy laws. Interpreters use secure communication methods, whether in person, over the phone, or through video, to ensure that your health information remains private.



When you work with a certified medical interpreter, they are considered part of the health care services you are receiving.

You will not need to give special permission for the certified medical interpreter to know your health information and help in your health care visit.



Understanding Your Right to Language Access Services



Working with a Medical Interpreter

Facts about Medical Interpreters

Medical interpreters go through a training process and have to take an exam to receive their certificate to work in health care.

- The health care field needs more medical interpreters. The job is flexible and offers a way to help others in the community.

Medical interpreters are trained to protect your privacy. It's the law.

- Even if the medical interpreter is someone you know from your community, they are not allowed to share any of your personal medical information outside of your health care visit. Learn more about the [Health Information Portability and Accountability Act](#).

By law, language access services never cost you money.



Is your child or another family member interpreting for you during health care visits?

If so, you might not be getting the best information to help you make health care decisions. **A certified medical interpreter:**

- Understands the words and terms used in the health care setting
- Can help you ask questions and get clear information from your health care provider
- Respects the privacy of your medical information
- Will not share their personal opinions
- Will keep the interaction professional in every way, even if you have met the interpreter before



Understanding Your Right to Language Access Services



Working with a Medical Interpreter

How to have a successful health care appointment with an interpreter

Prepare for your appointment. Write down symptoms, medical history, concerns and questions you may have for the health care provider.

Speak directly to your health care provider. Address all conversation to the provider instead of the interpreter.

Be clear and concise. Use short sentences, simple language and avoid using complex medical words.

Ask questions. If you don't understand something that has been said, ask the provider to repeat or say it in another way that is easier for you to understand.

Understand Everyone's Roles

It is important that everyone in your health care appointment understands their role during the visit.

Patient or caregiver's role

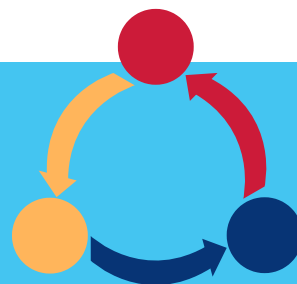
- Communicate health concerns and symptoms
- Ask questions
- Give information that helps the team develop a plan for care

Interpreter's role

- Translate spoken words between you and the healthcare provider accurately

Health care provider's role

- Provide medical information in ways that are easy to understand
- Pause frequently to allow interpretation
- Listen and check for understanding



Becoming a Medical Interpreter



How can I become a certified medical interpreter?

The requirements to become a medical interpreter can be different depending on where you live and where you get your certification. Here is a list of what is usually required.

Age

- 18 years of age or older

Education

- High school education or GED, or any degree from an institution of higher education
- Proof of medical interpretation training
 - College or university coursework
 - Approved medical interpretation training (40 hours minimum)



Language and Experience Required

- Oral and written proficiency in English
- Oral and written proficiency in the language for which you want to be an interpreter
- Prior experience as an interpreter is not required.
- Prior experience in the medical field is not required.



Typical costs to become a medical interpreter

- You can receive training to become a medical interpreter. The training is offered by professional associations and educational institutions.
- Training can be in person or virtual. and the average cost is between \$300 and \$1,000.
- Once you complete the training, you can take an exam to become certified. The certification examination process usually costs between \$200 and \$400. Certification has to be renewed every three to five years, and it usually costs \$300 to \$500, depending on the certifying organization.



Understanding Your Right to Language Access Services



Working with Your Health Care Provider to Plan Interpretation Services

If English is not your preferred language, you have a right to use interpreter services in the health care setting. You will need to work with your health care provider to set up the services you need.

1

You have a right to a qualified medical interpreter. A qualified medical interpreter understands health care and can make sure that the communication between you and your health care provider is accurate and clear.

The interpreter can help you and your health care provider understand each other so you have the information you need to fully participate in your child's care.

2

Unless they are qualified as medical interpreters, family members, office staff, and other patients should not be used as interpreters during a health care visit.

3

Make sure your healthcare provider and their staff know your preferred language and which language access services you want to use.

4

Make sure your healthcare provider and staff know your preferred language and which language access services you want to use.



By law, language access services never cost you money.

Interpretation apps and software (like Google Translate) should not be used in your healthcare visits because they may not be accurate and may not include medical terms.

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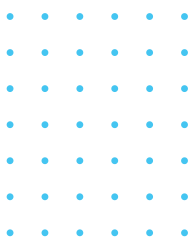
Becoming a Medical Interpreter



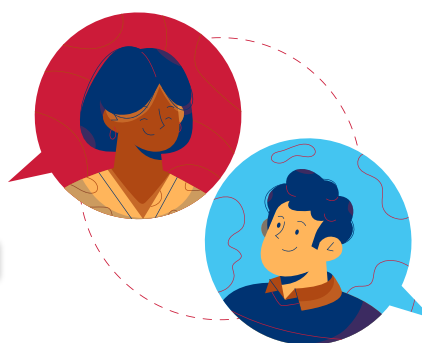
How long does it take to become a medical interpreter?



- Medical interpreter training and certification can take anywhere from a few weeks to a few months (depending on program schedules, your individual pace, and other factors).
- Certification renewal can occur every three to five years (depending on the certification language).



Benefits of Becoming a Certified Medical Interpreter



- Medical interpreters have a direct impact on patient safety and people's experiences in the health care setting.
- Medical interpreters help to eliminate health disparities by supporting families and making sure they have the ability to participate in their health care decisions. This is especially important for families of children and youth with special health care needs, who often need more medical care than other children.
- Medical interpreters are a fast-growing part of health care and they are in demand in the medical field. They earn an average salary of \$53,000 – \$87,000 per year.
- Medical interpreters enjoy flexible work schedules and workplace settings (e.g., in-person, virtual, or via phone).

