



## TIPS FOR LOCATING INTERPRETER SERVICES

First, assess the oral linguistic needs of your Limited English Proficient (LEP) patients. Second, assess the services available to meet these needs.

**Assess the language capability** of your staff (*See Employee Language Skills Self-Assessment*)

- Keep a list of available bilingual staff who can assist with LEP patients on-site.

**Assess services available** through patient health plans

- Ask all health plans you work with if and when they provide interpreter services, including American Sign Language interpreters, as a covered benefit for their members.
- Identify the policies and procedures in place to access interpreter services for each plan you work with.
- Keep an updated list of specific telephone numbers and health plan contacts for language services.
- Ask the agency providing the interpreter for their training standards and methods of assessing interpreter quality.
- Don't forget to inquire about Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) services for the hard of hearing/deaf.

**If services are covered, identify the appropriate contact** and request the health plan's process to access services.

- Determine if face-to-face and/or telephone interpreters are covered.
- If face-to-face interpreters are covered, have the following information ready before requesting the interpreter: gender, age, language needed, date/time of appointment, type of visit, and office specialty.
  - *Remember to follow all HIPAA regulations when transmitting any patient-identifiable information to parties outside your office.*
- If telephone interpreters are covered, relay the pertinent patient information which will help the interpreter better serve the needs of the patient and the provider.

**If interpreter services are NOT covered** by the patient's health plan, **find other resources** to meet the linguistic needs of your LEP patients.

- Use trained/capable internal staff.
- Contract with a telephonic interpreting company. (*See Telephonic Interpreting Companies.*) It is recommended that you assess the quality of the services provided by these vendors.
- Check for services available through Community Based Organizations. Some provide free face-to-face interpreter services for the community or they may offer low fees.
- Depending on the linguistic needs of your LEP population, you may have to consider hiring a professional interpreter.
- For further information, you may contact the National Council on Interpretation in Health Care, the Society of American Interpreters, the Translators & Interpreters Guild, the American Translators Association, or any local Health Care Interpreters association in your area.