

Interpreter Services Overview

Individuals who are Deaf or limited English proficient (LEP) are challenged by communication barriers that can result in health disparities, errors, and harm. There are several legal and regulatory requirements mandating access to qualified interpreters to protect our patient's right to participate in and make informed decisions about their own health care. Interpreters are provided by HFHS to our patients free of charge.

Services available at HFHS:

1. **Telephone Interpreters:** Available 24/7. Flat rate \$0.85/minute. Foreign languages only. Some high-need languages (e.g. Yemeni, Bengali) are not consistently available. Use dual handset phone (analog line) or speaker phone. 3rd party conference calling is available (inform the operator at start of call and have the 3rd party phone number available). Dial (9) 1-800-264-1552 and provide access code or specific location.
2. **In-person Interpreters:** Costly - \$40 - \$80 per hour with a 2-hour minimum plus travel time. Use for complex visits (group therapy, initial psych assessments, complex teaching) or when needed language is not available via technology options. First choice for patients needing American Sign Language (ASL). Approval required for over-night interpreting. Ordered through Epic (except Allegiance Health which uses a web-based process).
3. **Video Remote Interpreting (VRI):** Available 24/7. Flat rate \$0.81/minute for foreign languages and \$0.95/minute for ASL. An iPad Pro with VRI app installed on a mobile, flexible stand. Not yet available in all settings (spread in progress). Use for foreign languages (if no video interpreter is available, the system will provide an audio interpreter). Provides improved access to high need languages and dialects. Use as a bridge for ASL until a qualified in-person interpreter is available.
4. **VRI phone app on HFHS managed provider phones (new).** Available 24/7. Use for foreign languages. Should NOT be used for ASL unless all other options have been exhausted (in-person interpreter, large screen VRI). ASL is a visual language and qualified in-person interpreters is always the first choice for effective communication.

*Provide patient MRN when using technology options (telephone, VRI) – approved by compliance. Although the call is not linked to you, it can help provide proof that an interpreter was used for the patient in the event of a formal complaint.

*Fully bilingual professional staff may speak with their own patients in the shared language (if the patient agrees), but not interpret (facilitate communication between 2 or more people). The use of “qualified” interpreters is a legal and regulatory requirement. Interpretation is a skill that requires competency assessment (proficiency in English, target language, medical terminology, and interpretation skills). We have contracts with several vendors for this purpose.

Documentation:

- Always document when an interpreter was used. Documentation protects YOU in the event of a formal complaint.
- Technology options (telephone, VRI) will provide an interpreter ID. Please document this.
- Ideally, documentation is done in the Interpreter Services navigator found in Epic in the story board (left side of screen). Click on “language” to access the navigator or go to “more activities” if not visible. The navigator provides easy check options to facilitate documentation.

Additional Resources:

- Visit the Interpreter Services webpage on OneHENRY (available under quick links) for more information. Allegiance Health has a separate webpage that can be accessed via this page.

