

How to Request HCA Interpreter Services

The Health Care Authority (HCA) offers interpreter services for Medicaid clients through Universal Language Service.

The HCA Interpreter Services program is available to healthcare providers serving limited English proficient (LEP), Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Blind Medicaid clients and individuals applying for or receiving Medicaid, DSHS or DCYF services. For more information, visit HCA's [Interpreter Services webpage](#).

- **In order to request an interpreter through the HCA contractor, you must [register](https://hcauniversal.com/new-requester-registration/) with Universal Language Service.** (<https://hcauniversal.com/new-requester-registration/>)
 - In order to register you will need to have a National Provider Identifier (NPI) –be sure to check your revalidation date and keep your NPI up-to-date
 - Most providers will select Medical under requester type
- **Once you are registered, Universal Language Service will email your login information and a link to their [Customer User Guide](#) that will help you navigate their site.**
 - Login information cannot be shared with multiple staff members. Each staff person needs to have a unique log in and unique email to schedule interpreter services.
- **Request all interpretive services through Universal Language Service**
 - Universal Language Service has contracts with interpreters and will identify and communicate with an interpreter and send you a confirmation message
 - The interpreter will arrive at the facility at the time designated
- **The provider or clinic staff must document the start and finish time of the interpretive services in Universal Language Service's online system**
- **Universal Language Service will directly bill the HCA for interpreter services**
- **HCA does not pay for interpreter services for administrative tasks such as:**
 - Scheduling appointments
 - Appointment reminder phone calls
 - Paperwork

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Customer Accounts Support team at Universal Language Service at (425) 450-7020 or accounts@ulsonline.net.

Providers are required to ensure spoken and sign language access according to [Title VI of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964](#) and the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#).

Tips for communicating through an interpreter

Trained interpreters help to assure effective communication between the client and provider, support effective use of time during the clinical encounter, and improve outcomes. Remember to schedule the interpreter for the time you anticipate the patient arriving for the appointment.

Working Effectively Through an Interpreter

- **Introduce yourself to the interpreter.** It may be helpful to brief the interpreter prior to the conversation and discuss if the interpretation will be consecutive or simultaneous.
- **Speak directly to the patient,** not to the interpreter.
- **Speak at an even pace in relatively short segments.** Pause so the interpreter can interpret.
- Assume, and insist, that **everything** you say, everything the patient says, and everything that family members say **is interpreted**.
- **Do not hold the interpreter responsible for what the patient says or doesn't say.** The interpreter is the medium, not the source, of the message. If you feel that you are not getting the type of response you were expecting, restate the question or consult with the interpreter to better understand if there is a cultural barrier that is interfering with communication.
- Be aware that **many concepts you express have no linguistic or conceptual equivalent in other languages.** The interpreter may have to paint word pictures of many terms you use. This may take longer than your original speech.
- Give the interpreter time to restructure information in his/her mind and present it in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. **Speaking English does not mean thinking in English.**
- Remember that your patient may have been a victim of torture or trauma. This may also be true for the interpreter. If you need to ask questions that may be extremely **personal or sensitive**, explain to the patient that doing so is part of your evaluation and reiterate that the information will remain confidential.
- **Encourage the interpreter** to ask questions and to alert you about potential cultural misunderstandings that may come up. Respect an interpreter's judgment that a particular question is culturally inappropriate and either rephrase the question or ask the interpreter's help in eliciting the information in a more appropriate way.
- **Avoid patronizing or infantilizing the patient.** A lack of English language skills is not a reflection of low cognitive function or a lack of education. Your patient may be a college professor or a medical doctor in her own country just as easily as she may be a farm worker.
- Ask the patient **what he/she believes the problem is**, what causes it, and how it would be treated in their country of origin.
- Ask the patient to **repeat back** important information that you want to make sure is understood.
- **Be patient.** Providing care across a language barrier takes time. However, the time spent up front will be paid back by good rapport and clear communication that will avoid wasted time and dangerous misunderstandings.

Source: <https://refugeehealthta.org/access-to-care/language-access/best-practices-communicating-through-an-interpreter/>