

SECTION: Patient Care

NUMBER: 08-007

SUBJECT: Interpreters/Linguistic Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

PURPOSE:

To enable communication between providers and patients in John Dempsey Hospital who do not speak English or have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and to provide such patients with equal access to benefits, programs, hospital and other medical and social services.

POLICY:

- 1) Mechanisms for communication with persons who have Limited English Proficiency will be provided in accordance with Joint Commission standards and Connecticut Statute Sec. 19a-490i. A person with Limited English Proficiency is one whose preferred language is other than English and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English. The assistance of an interpreter may be required for communication to be fully effective.
In accordance with the regulations, it is acknowledged that:
 - a) Patients have the right to effective communication with health care providers.
 - b) Friends or family members should not be required to interpret for the patient.
 - c) The patients must be advised that a qualified interpreter is available at no cost to them.
 - d) Signs are posted with all John Dempsey Hospital patient care areas identifying the availability of interpreting services.

- 2) Use of qualified interpreters and ad hoc interpreters
 - a) Family members or friends of patients are considered to be ad hoc interpreters. An ad hoc interpreter is an untrained person who is called to interpret at the patient's request, or in the event of an emergent medical situation in which waiting for an interpreter would delay the delivery of care. Family members or friends of LEP patients are not permitted to interpret for patients, except in the following:
 - i. When such an arrangement is requested by the LEP patient, after having declined the offer of interpreting services. These patients will be required to sign an Interpreter Services Waiver form, which will become a permanent part of their record, and entered within IDX.

 - ii. In an emergency situation in which waiting for the interpreter would delay the delivery of medical care. (The treating clinician is responsible for determining that an emergency exists.)

SECTION: Patient Care

NUMBER: 08-007

SUBJECT: Interpreters/Linguistic Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

- b) A qualified interpreter is required during the interpretation of legal documents such as informed consents and Interpreter Services Waiver forms. A qualified interpreter is a person who has been assessed for their fluency in both English and the language of the non-English speaker, who is proficient in the skills and ethics of interpreting and is knowledgeable about specialized medical terms and concepts. Bilingual staff serving as interpreters within UCHC must have documentation of a passing score on an interpreter skills test and have received training on the National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice from the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care. Following the interpretation and patient's signature, the ad hoc interpreter may continue interpreting, if the patient desires. The use of Language Line may be substituted for an onsite interpreter when a qualified interpreter is not available. The Language Line is a telephone interpreter service with professionally trained and tested interpreters, covering 170 languages. This service can be accessed 24 hours per day through the UCHC operator, or through a direct connection with the dual handset Language Line phones, located within each patient care area.
 - c) The use of minors as interpreters is strictly prohibited, under any circumstances.
3. Use of bilingual employees as interpreters:
- a) Bilingual employees may provide interpretation when they have been tested, trained and deemed qualified by the Interpreter Services Office.
 - b) Department managers are responsible for assuring that only qualified employees are utilized to provide medical interpretation.
 - c) A list of qualified bilingual employees will be maintained in the public shared folders, in the Interpreters' Office and with Telecommunications. These employees can be used as interpreters within their units and dispatched to other patient areas as available.
4. Translation of documents
- a) Bilingual employees are not to be routinely utilized for the translation of documents. A translator is a qualified person who translates written documents from one language into another, requiring expertise in writing skills in both languages. Professional translation services are available for a fee through an outside agency. Contact the Interpreter Services Office, 679-2289, for additional information about this service.

SECTION: Patient Care

NUMBER: 08-007

SUBJECT: Interpreters/Linguistic Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

PROCEDURES

1. All patients receiving care will be assessed for their need for interpreter services in order to provide effective communication about their medical care.
2. The initial communication needs assessment will be made at the time a patient is registered or upon arrival of the patient at the hospital, whichever is earlier.
 - a) Telephone assessment of patient:
 - i. Registrar or clerical staff in the location of care will ask the patient “In what language would you like to receive your care and medical instructions?”
 1. Complete the Preferred Language Field in IDX
 - a. If not English, ask patient if they require an interpreter and inform the patient of his/her right to communicate through an interpreter in John Dempsey Hospital free of charge.
 - b. Update Interpreter Required field in IDX with Y or N
 - i. If Y, you may contact a qualified interpreter directly or call the Interpreter Services Office at 679-2289 to request an interpreter. Please include the patient’s name, location, reason, and duration needed.
 - ii. If N,
 1. Ask if the patient wishes to waive their right to have an interpreter.
 2. Update the Interpreter Waived field in IDX to Y
 - a. Call the Interpreter Services Office at 679-2289 to schedule an interpreter to translate the waiver when the patient will be arriving.
 - b. Interpreters will report to the department at the requested time. The interpreter will wait 15 minutes beyond the scheduled time of the appointment. Beyond that, the interpreter will leave unless the department can confirm that the patient can be seen within the scheduled length of time. If this can not be confirmed, the visit will be handled as an unscheduled appointment, and Language Line services will need to be utilized.

SECTION: Patient Care

NUMBER: 08-007

SUBJECT: Interpreters/Linguistic Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

- b. The patient progress note will be used by the health care provider to document use or refusal of interpreter services for all patients with Limited English Proficiency. The progress note must indicate when one of the following:
 1. A qualified interpreter employee is used;
 - a. All qualified bilingual employees must document their interpreting services on an Encounter Form, including the refusal of an interpreter after their arrival. The white copy is placed in the patient's medical record, and the yellow copy is returned to the Interpreter Services office.
 2. Language Line telephonic interpretation is used (document ID# of interpreter);
 3. The patient refuses use of an interpreter;
 4. The patient provides their own interpreter (document name and relationship of person interpreting);
 5. An ad hoc interpreter is utilized in an emergent situation;
 6. An ad hoc interpreter is utilized because the patient's language is not available by neither face-to-face nor telephonic interpretation.
- c. Receiving care in the Radiology or Lab Medicine departments,
 - i. The staff will place an order for interpreter services in the department's clinical system to document the use of Interpreter Services during the testing period.
 - ii. Call the Interpreter Services Office at 679-2289 to schedule an interpreter when the patient will be arriving. Interpreters will report to the department at the requested time. The interpreter will wait 15 minutes beyond the scheduled time of the appointment. Beyond that, the interpreter will leave unless the department can confirm that the patient can be seen within the scheduled length of time. If this can not be confirmed, the visit will be handled as an unscheduled appointment, and Language Line services will need to be utilized.
 - iii. The Language Line must be used if an interpreter is not available when the patient arrives.
4. Receiving care in an outpatient hospital procedure area which requires informed consent,
 - a. In accordance with HAM policy 06-002, all informed consents performed in John Dempsey Hospital and signed by a LEP patient must be done in the presence of a qualified interpreter, regardless of the patient's waiving of interpreter services. However, consents signed in UMG or outside of UCHC are valid and acceptable.

SECTION: Patient Care

NUMBER: 08-007

SUBJECT: Interpreters/Linguistic Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

- i. Call the Interpreter Services Office at 679-2289 to schedule an interpreter when the patient will be arriving. Interpreters will report to the department at the requested time. The interpreter will wait 15 minutes beyond the scheduled time of the appointment. Beyond that, the interpreter will leave unless the department can confirm that the patient can be seen within the scheduled length of time. If this can not be confirmed, the visit will be handled as an unscheduled appointment, and Language Line services will need to be utilized.
- ii. The Language Line must be used if an interpreter is not available when the patient arrives.

5. Receiving care in an Inpatient location

- a. Staff ask LEP Patients if they wish to utilize Interpreter Services free of charge.
- b. A LEP patient accepts the offer of interpreting services upon admission.
- c. The department staff should post an "Interpreter Services" sign at the entrance to the patient's room and indicate the patient's language on the white board.
- d. A dual handset Language Line phone should be made available to the patient; one is stored on each inpatient unit, and additional phones may be acquired from the Nursing Staffing/Payroll Office ext. 1031.

6. Receiving care in the Emergency Department or other unscheduled requests in a hospital department

- a. Contact the hospital operator to page the interpreter on-call;
- b. You will then be given instructions if the request can be accommodated by a qualified in-house interpreter, or if Language Line services will need to be used.

Mike H. Summerer, M.D.
Hospital Director

Richard H. Simon, M.D.
Chief of Staff

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