



MASSACHUSETTS  
GENERAL HOSPITAL

# IMPLEMENTING INTERPRETING SERVICES

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**Amsterdam, December 2004**

# MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

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- Understand Current Reality
  - Where is your hospital/clinic located?
  - Does your hospital/clinic attract immigrant populations?
  - Does your hospital/clinic receive patients from the immigrant population?
  - Does your hospital/clinic understand about language barrier issues?
  - Does your hospital/clinic have a budget allocated to deal with language barrier issues?
  - What has the hospital/clinic done to address the issue of language barriers?

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## ■ Do A Needs Assessment

### ➤ Gather supporting data such as:

- Number of immigrants in your city/town
- Number of ethnic minority groups represented in your city/town
- Number of immigrants receiving care at your hospital/clinic
- Languages represented by the immigrant population
- Number of times immigrants with no knowledge of the local language come to the hospital to receive care (monthly, yearly)

# MANAGEMENT SUPPORT



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- Evaluate the drawback of NOT offering language services in the hospital/clinic
  - Human issues:
    - Patients will have limited access to healthcare services
    - Patients will not understand their health issues
    - Patients will not know about follow up care needed
    - Patients will receive inequality of care
    - Patients will have to wait longer to be treated
    - Patients will have to rely on ad-hoc interpreters such as children, family members or friends to help them communicate
    - Clinical staff can possibly give them the wrong diagnosis

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- Evaluate the drawback of NOT offering language services in the hospital/clinic
  - Cost issues:
    - Unnecessary visits
    - Missed appointments
    - Unnecessary diagnostic tests
    - Complications due to non-compliance
    - Lengthy visits

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- Evaluate the advantages of offering language services in the hospital/clinic
  - Human advantages:
    - Better customer service
    - Increase quality of care
    - Increase equality of care
    - Increase awareness about their care
    - Empower immigrant population to control their care
    - Increase access to health services

# MANAGEMENT SUPPORT



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- Evaluate the advantages of offering language services in the hospital/clinic
  - Cost effectiveness
    - Reduce the number of unnecessary visits
    - Reduce the number of unnecessary diagnostic tests
    - Reduce the number of no-show to tests and procedures
    - Enhance good communication to achieve reduced length of time for patients appointments

# MANAGEMENT SUPPORT



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- In the United States having services available is not only the right thing to do but it is the law at the federal, state and local levels.
- Example of some of the laws that support language services in the United States:
  - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
  - Medicaid law and related regulations
  - The Hill-Burton Act
  - The Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act
  - Tort Liability
  - State Laws

Reference: Find a summary of the Laws at the [www.diversityrx.org](http://www.diversityrx.org)

# COORDINATION OF SERVICES



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- Evaluate hospital culture to decide which department is appropriate to manage language services?
  - Patient care department?
  - Social Services/Social Issues department?
  - Community issues department?
  - Equality of care/Diversity department?
  - Clinical staff department?

**Note:** Each hospital or clinic in the United States has language services organized under the department that best fits their institutional culture.

# COORDINATION OF SERVICES



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- Develop systems to organize service delivery
  - Centralize services through the department to:
    - Maintain cost control
    - Track need for services and volume increase for sustainability
    - Ensure quality of services
    - Ensure access to services
    - Ensure implementation of services
  - Develop a job description for the coordinator
  - Assign a coordinator or add the coordination responsibility to a staff member of the department in charge of language services

**Note:** Most of the hospital/clinics in the United States have centralized services to be able to track cost and volume increase.

# COORDINATION OF SERVICES



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- Develop systems to organize service delivery
  - Find ways to capture patients preferred language while in the hospital either manually or electronically
  - Create a scheduling system, either manually or electronically, to better organize the need and to ensure service delivery
  - Create a method to be able to document need and volume increase to be able to forecast need for more staff or more languages that needed to be added
  - Keep track of services rendered for payment of resource used to deliver the service

# RESOURCE TO DELIVER SERVICES



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- Decide on the resources to be used to deliver services needed
- Evaluate each resource for cost effectiveness and quality
- Evaluate the advantages or disadvantages of each resource
- Verify with hospital administration regarding ability to pay resources or to contract out with agencies

# RESOURCE TO DELIVER SERVICES



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- Options of resources:
  - Hire staff interpreters to cover the top language need
  - Hire freelance/contractor interpreters for other languages need
  - Coordinate with bi-lingual hospital staff with knowledge about interpreting to step in as needed
  - Contract with an outside agency for face to face interpretation
  - Contract with an outside agency for telephone interpretation
  - Add the interpreting responsibility to the cultural mediator (if you have this model at your hospital/clinic). Training will be needed.

# RESOURCE TO DELIVER SERVICES



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- Develop for the interpreter:
  - Job description that will fit the hospital/clinic policies
  - Working guidelines and policies
  
- Salaries depend on:
  - Market/location
  - Hospital/clinic salary structure
  - Candidates' experience

(Salaries may be comparable to those in Allied Health professions)

**Note:** Across United States Medical Interpreters salaries vary.

# SKILLS ASSESSMENT/TRAINING



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- Create evaluation tools to evaluate:
  - Knowledge of medical terminology
  - Knowledge of basic anatomy and physiology
  - Ability to write simple instructions
  - Ability to retain information and deliver it accurately
  - Ability to take notes while listening and deliver the information accurately

**Note:** Currently in the United States there is no certification/license for interpreters therefore each hospital/clinic has the responsibility to create their own way to evaluate their interpreters.

# SKILLS ASSESSMENT/TRAINING



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- Develop training sessions for interpreters
  - Use nurses or doctors to deliver presentations about different clinical areas
  - Review working standards for the hospital/clinic
  - Review policies that need to be followed
  - Review how documentation needs to be tracked
  - Review interpreting standards

**Note:** Across United States there are Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics that serve as a guide for interpreters on how to do their job.

# SKILLS ASSESSMENT/TRAINING



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- Develop training sessions for clinical staff to learn:
  - How to access interpreting services
  - How to work with the interpreters
  - The importance of communicating with their non-local language speaking patients through an interpreter
  - Advantages of working with an interpreter

# MARKETING/SERVICE EVALUATION



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- Once most of the services are in place:
  - Develop informational materials for clinical staff on how to access services and how to work with interpreters
  - Develop informational materials for patients to learn how to access services
  - Develop materials for patients to identify their preferred language to staff while in the hospital

# MARKETING/SERVICE EVALUATION



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- Conduct a survey of clinical staff
- Conduct a survey of patients
  - Evaluate:
    - Staff/patient awareness of the language services
    - Staff/patient satisfaction with language services
    - Staff/patient perception of improvements that need to happen within the language services department

# References



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- Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS)
  - [www.omhrc.gov/clas](http://www.omhrc.gov/clas)
- Diversity RX
  - [www.diversityrx.com](http://www.diversityrx.com)
- Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations
  - [www.jcaho.org](http://www.jcaho.org)
- Let Everyone Participate
  - [www.lep.gov](http://www.lep.gov)
- Massachusetts Medical Interpreters Association (MMIA)
  - [www.mmia.org](http://www.mmia.org)
- National Council on Interpreting in Healthcare
  - [www.ncihc.org](http://www.ncihc.org)
- Queensland Government – Multicultural Health
  - [www.health.qld.gov.au./multicultural/links.asp](http://www.health.qld.gov.au./multicultural/links.asp)
- The Critical Link
  - <http://www.criticallink.org>
- United States Department of Health and Human Services
  - [www.hhs.gov/ocr/lep/](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/lep/)