



SUBJECT: LANGUAGE ACCESS POLICY FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT PATIENTS AND FAMILIES

POLICY:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that effective communication with patients that have limited English Proficiency [LEP] and those who are hearing impaired can effectively provide hospital staff with a clear statement of their medical condition and history and understand the provider's assessment of their medical condition and treatment options.

IDENTIFICATION OF PATIENTS:

At Hazel Hawkins Memorial Hospital (HHH), patients whose primary language is Spanish comprise more than 5% of the population as evidenced by statistics obtained from the Office of Statewide Planning and Development. There are no other non-English speaking individuals that comprise more than 5% of the hospital population. Therefore, at a minimum this policy pertains to Spanish speaking clients; however it is the intent of HHH to be able to provide effective communication and services to all patients who need health care, but have existing language barriers.

At the time of registration, or as soon as possible thereafter, or at the time of treatment in outpatient areas, all patients will be asked to state the language/dialect they speak, or specify in some manner that they are hearing impaired. Portable text telephones are available from hospital staff. Signs are posted throughout the hospital with this information in English and Spanish.

The patient or surrogate decision-maker shall be asked the following questions in this order during the course of their first intake process:

- a. Do you speak a language other than English at home? If the answer to this question is yes, the language will be noted and the next question will be asked.
- b. How well do you speak English?
 1. Very well
 2. Well
 3. Not well
 4. Not at all
- c. In what language do you prefer to receive your medical services?
- d. In what language do you prefer to receive written materials?

If the patient or surrogate decision-maker answers with a language other than English on question "a" and anything other than "very well" (number 1) in question "b", they shall be designated as LEP (limited English proficient) which shall be recorded in patient records.

During the interview as the patient first acquires services at HHH, LEP patients shall be informed of their right to have a healthcare interpreter in their language, free of charge, within a reasonable time. If the patient's answer to the question "Do you speak a language other than English at home?" is "yes," the statement on the provision of interpreting services will be read aloud to the patient (except when it is clear the patient will not be able to understand the English text to follow):

“You have a right to an interpreter in your own language who can help you speak with your doctor or other health care provider at no cost to you.”

IDENTIFICATION OF INTERPRETERS

- A. Mechanism for the Provision of interpreter services include;
 - 1. Licensed staff who have rated their second language skill as good may interpret medical information. Non-licensed staff who have rated their second language skill as good may interpret general information. (See appendix A)
 - 2. AT&T Language Line
 - a. The Language Line is available in all inpatient and outpatient areas during all hours of operation.
- B. Every effort is made to hire bilingual (Spanish and English) staff for patient registration, admission and any position that would be the public’s first contact with hospital personnel.
- C. Patients or their representative may request use of a family member to interpret for them. Their wishes should be respected. However, use of a minor as an interpreter may raise questions related to competency, confidentiality, and conflict of interest. If life, health safety or access to important benefits and services are at stake an additional interpreter should be utilized. Examples are domestic violence the informed consent process and disclosure of unexpected outcomes.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Because Spanish speaking patients compromise a large percentage of our population, all consent forms, patient rights, patient education discharge plans etc. are printed in Spanish and English. All Hospital signage is posted in English and in Spanish.

DOCUMENTATION

Each medical record shall show the primary language spoken by the patient/surrogate decision maker. The patient’s need for interpreter services shall be included in the following areas:

- 1. Nursing Assessment for inpatient admissions
- 2. The patient record of outpatient encounters.

All use of interpreters will be recorded in the patient’s medical record.

REFERENCES

AT&T Language Line

ATTACHMENT:

SAN BENITO HEALTHCARE DISTRICT INTERPRETER CALL LIST