

Approved By:	Board of Directors	Adopted Date:	Unknown
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PURPOSE:

Open Door Community Health Services (ODCHC) wants all patients, regardless of language skill, to have access to interpretation services to allow for clear and precise communication with their health care team. This policy defines how ODCHC provides these services.

DEFINITIONS:

American Sign Language (ASL): American Sign Language is a visually perceived language of articulated hand gestures and their placement relative to the body, along with non-manual markers such as facial expressions, head movements, shoulder raises, mouth morphemes, and movements of the body.

Health Care Interpreting: Interpreting that takes place in health care settings of any sort within an ODCHC medical or dental center, including telephone and written communications. This can also include interpreting within the context of providing behavioral, substance abuse, and mental health services. Typically, the interpretation occurs during an interview or encounter between a health care provider (e.g. provider, nurse, lab tech, etc.) and a patient. The interpretation may include one or more members of the patient's family or other representative.

Interpreter: A person who renders a message spoken or signed in one language into a second language.

Interpreting: Rendering a spoken or signed message into another spoken or signed language, preserving the register and meaning of the source language content. The message should be interpreted accurately and objectively, taking the cultural and social context into account. Within the language profession, the term translation is restricted to the process of converting written messages. At times, those individuals who serve as interpreters may be called upon, to the extent they feel comfortable in the role, to serve as translators.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): The inability to speak, read, write, or understand the English language at a level that permits an individual to interact effectively with the health care team and social service agencies. Someone who can understand English sufficiently to interact effectively in a grocery store or other casual environment may not have the ability to understand the more complex communications involved in medical or dental care, particularly understanding diagnosis, medications, medication schedules, side effects, and self-care instructions.

Verification of Proficiency: A process by which ODCHC affirms that an individual is qualified to provide a particular interpreting service. ODCHC uses a process that has been tested and determined to accurately identify those individuals who can serve as interpreters in health care encounters and settings. Bilingual employees who desire to act as interpreters and are found lacking in certain areas of necessary knowledge may be further trained by ODCHC.

POLICY:

ODCHC provides language assistance services for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) patients, in accordance with the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

- Each health center will post informational signs notifying patients of their right to receive free language assistance services. Signs will be posted in all languages typically encountered in the ODCHC service area.

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- Assessment of primary language and the need for language assistance services will be routinely assessed during new patient registration, and tracked in the electronic health record (EHR).
- Language interpretation services are provided to LEP patients receiving services at ODCHC health centers through the following mechanisms:
 - **Bilingual Staff:** Most services are provided using bilingual staff, either in the direct delivery of the service, or acting in the role of interpreter. Each staff member that serves in the role of interpreter for clinical services will be evaluated for competency through the Verification of Proficiency process prior to serving in this capacity. Records of certification of staff competency will be maintained in personnel files. Bilingual staff may be certified at different levels of competency (that is, for interpretation for administrative work, medical services, dental services, etc.).
 - **Contract Interpreters:** Contract interpreters are used for languages not spoken by health center staff. Arrangements are made by health center managers and contracted interpreters are paid by ODCHC.
 - **Telephone Interpretation Service:** An account with a telephone interpretation service will be maintained for use. It is anticipated that such services may be used for unusual languages or for services when bilingual staff members are not available.
 - **Partnership Healthplan of California Patients:** Partnership Healthplan offers telephone and face-to-face interpreter services for PHC patients.
- ODCHC strongly discourages the use of family members or friends, especially minors, as interpreters for ODCHC patients. Using an untrained interpreter may result in miscommunication of medical information and compromise quality of care. It may also cause embarrassment when discussing sensitive topics.
- Required and/or commonly used patient forms and handouts will be made available in English and Spanish. Interpreters will be used to assist LEP patients for written materials not available in the needed language. Requests for translation of new or existing documents will be routed to the Operations Department.
- All language interpretation services will be tracked through the established tracking systems.
- The Human Resources Department will maintain a list of bilingual staff that have completed the Verification of Proficiency process for language interpretation services.
- ODCHC staff may provide language interpretation for ODCHC patients accessing outside services upon referral from an ODCHC provider. The function of this interpretation assistance is to facilitate completion of the referral process.
- In order to enhance the provision of language assistance services to LEP patients, ODCHC will actively encourage bilingual skills in recruitment and retention decisions.
- If a patient declines interpreter services, state law requires ODCHC to document such in the medical record.

REFERENCES:

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Affordable Care Act Section 1557

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ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS:

OPS.006 Bilingual and ASL Services (Retired)

ODCHC Standards of Practice for Interpreters

Telelanguage Telephone Interpretation Service Instructions for Use

Communique Interpreting Service Request form

Partnership Healthplan of California Interpreter Services Quick Reference Guide

KEYWORD TAGS:

Language, interpreter, assistance, translation, ESL