

4 HOSPITALS AGREE TO ADD TRANSLATORS FOR IMMIGS

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Byline: BY JORDAN LITE DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Body

FOUR LOCAL **hospitals** have **agreed to** improve their interpretation services after immigrants' rights groups charged they weren't abiding by laws requiring **translators** for emergency patients who don't speak English.

St. Vincent's **Hospital** Staten Island, Flushing and Jamaica **hospitals** in Queens and Brookdale Medical Center in Brooklyn said they would make interpreters available more consistently.

They also pledged to provide telephone translation services for callers, among other improvements, according to settlement language released yesterday by Attorney General Eliot Spitzer.

Immigrants "didn't understand treatment instructions, what was wrong with them or their children. That's a serious problem that can lead to very damaging outcomes," said Natalie Williams, Spitzer's civil rights chief.

St. Vincent's already has increased the number of its certified medical interpreters by 50% and plans to get phone-translation services on every unit, spokesman Michael Fagan said.

A new law that went into effect yesterday requires all **hospitals** in New York State to post signs offering free translation services to people who speak limited English, and to make them available within 10 minutes in emergencies and 20 minutes in other circumstances.

More than half of the city's immigrants surveyed say they've put off treatment, hidden their symptoms and been confused by medical instructions because **hospitals** don't always provide **translators**, according to a report by the New York Academy of Medicine.

"It's very scary because I don't know a lot of times what the seriousness is. I often go back a second time because I didn't understand the first time," said Maria Ventura of Bushwick.

Ventura said through a **translator** in a recent interview that she has been rebuffed when she has asked for a Spanish-language interpreter at the **hospital** that treats her 7-year-old son, Esteban, for an eye abnormality.

jlite@nydailynews.com

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