



**Language Access
EMSAM JULY 2025**

EFFECTIVE DATE: XX/XX/XX

POLICY REFERENCE NO: **4042**

SUPERSEDES: NEW

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1.** To provide guidance to field providers related to best practice when encountering an EMS patient where language may be a barrier to assessment and care.

2. DEFINITIONS:

- 2.1.** “Limited English Proficient” or “LEP” person shall mean an individual who does not speak, read, understand, or communicate English, is otherwise unable to communicate effectively in English because English is not the individual’s primary language or prefers to conduct the interaction in their native language.

3. POLICY

- 3.1.** This policy applies to patients and their legally recognized decision makers who dispatch has identified as a LEP individuals or for patients/decisions makers who self-identify as LEP. See Section 14 Reference for Language Identification card.
- 3.2.** If on scene EMS provider is fluent in patient’s primary language, **then** then may proceed with normal assessment and care using EMS provider as translator.
- 3.3.** If there is clinical concern for a **critical patient** (e.g., hypotension, trauma etc.), do not delay transport or care waiting for an interpretative tool.
- 3.4.** If there is no clinical concern for a critical patient, the interpretive option hierarchy is:
- 3.4.1.** Fluent EMS provider
 - 3.4.2.** Approved Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) compliant translation service or tool
 - 3.4.3.** Fluent family member (adult preferred)
 - 3.4.4.** Fluent bystander or first responder
 - 3.4.5.** Non-fluent provider

3.5. On scene delay is acceptable for attempt to obtain adequate interpretation for the following patients:

- 3.5.1.** Patient requesting to leave against medical advice
- 3.5.2.** Assault or abuse
- 3.5.3.** Psychiatric complaint
- 3.5.4.** Destination determination (e.g. stroke)

4. REFERENCES

- 4.1.** San Francisco City Ordinance Chapter 91. Language Access Ordinance

INTERPRETATION SERVICES AVAILABLE

**You have the right to request an interpreter at no cost to you.
Please point to your language. An interpreter will be called. Please wait.**