

 <p style="text-align: center;">County of Sacramento Department of Health Services Division of Behavioral Health Services Policy and Procedure</p>	Policy Issuer (Unit/Program)	Cultural Competence & Ethnic Services
	Policy Number	01-02
	Effective Date	6/20/2014
	Revision Date	12/4/2024
Title: Procedure for Access to Interpreter Services		Functional Area: Access to Care
Approved By: <i>Mary Nakamura</i>		

Background/Context:

All Sacramento County Behavioral Health Service (BHS) contracted providers and County operated programs shall ensure that clients who are limited English proficient (LEP) or are Deaf and Hard of Hearing will be provided with an interpreter at no cost to the client. The Division of Behavioral Health Services County operated, and contract provider staff rely primarily on verbal and non-verbal communication to engage clients, form a therapeutic relationship, conduct assessments and provide treatment. A language barrier can lead to miscommunications, which can significantly impact engagement, assessment and treatment (adapted from “Cross-Cultural Communication & Therapeutic Use of Interpreters in Mental Health”, March 2003, Lee, Evelyn, Ed.D., LCSW, Romero, Josie T., MSW, LCSW)

Definitions:

"Limited English Proficient" – Individuals who speak a language other than English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English are considered limited English proficient (adapted from US Department of Health & Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, “Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons”, 2004)

“Interpreter” – An interpreter is an individual who has been assessed for professional skills, demonstrates a high level of proficiency in at least two languages, and has the appropriate training and experience to render a message spoken or signed in one language into a second language and who abides by a code of professional ethics (The Department of Health and Human Services LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN, 2013). In addition to the linguistic interpretation of the message given, the interpreter can provide cultural information and a necessary cultural framework for understanding the message (adapted from “Cross-Cultural Communication & Therapeutic Use of Interpreters in Mental Health”, March 2003, Lee, Evelyn, Ed.D., LCSW, Romero, Josie T., MSW, LCSW).

Purpose:

The provision of medically necessary, culturally and linguistically competent specialty mental health services and/or substance use services are fundamental to ensure access and delivery of appropriate services to beneficiaries. Language access is essential to this effort. When bilingual and bicultural provider staff are not available, the use of trained interpreters can help to bridge the language and cultural gap (adapted from “Cross- Cultural Communication & Therapeutic Use of Interpreters in Mental Health”, March 2003, Lee, Evelyn, Ed.D., LCSW, Romero, Josie T., MSW, LCSW)

Details:

- A. The Assisted Access language interpreter agency, currently Sacramento Cultural & Linguistic Center (SCLC) provides interpreter services to Sacramento County Behavioral Health Service contracted providers and County operated programs at no cost to the agency.
- B. In the event that a face-to-face spoken language interpreter is not available through Assisted Access:
 1. Mental Health Plan (MHP) and County operated programs must pay for face-to-face interpretation provided by an interpreting agency.
 2. Substance Use Prevention & Treatment (SUPT) contracted service providers must contact SUPT Administration in advance for prior authorization of no-cost, face-to-face interpreter services through a secondary agency. Written confirmation by SCLC of their unavailability is required as supplemental documentation. Costs incurred without prior authorization or are otherwise disallowed by SUPT Administration shall be paid by SUPT contracted service provider.
- C. In the event that agencies receive clients who are Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing:
 1. MHP and County operated programs must pay for culturally and linguistically appropriate interpreter services for clients who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
 2. SUPT contracted service providers must contact SUPT Administration in advance for prior authorization of no-cost, face-to-face interpreter services through a contracted interpreter agency. Costs incurred without prior authorization or are otherwise disallowed by SUPT Administration shall be paid by SUPT contracted service provider.
- D. When face-to-face interpreter services are not possible, over-the-phone interpreter services are available at a cost to BHS contracted service providers and County operated programs.
- E. Sacramento County Behavioral Health Services generally prohibits the use of family members as interpreters except in rare or extenuating circumstances:
 1. In emergencies where no other means of interpretation or communication are available.

2. When a client specifically chooses not to use an interpreter provided by Behavioral Health services and elects to use a family member for interpretation services, a Release of Information form must be signed by the client before the family member may be used as an interpreter. (See attached release form). Continued offers to provide an independent interpreter must not be excluded by this initial decision. Clinical decisions must always inform these efforts and may involve utilizing both family and an independent interpreter in specific circumstances.

Sacramento County Behavioral Health Services prohibits the use of children as interpreters in any circumstance.

In the event of emergency situations, providers are always responsible for accessing alternative interpreter services to ensure that children are not placed in a position to make this decision.

Reference(s)/Attachments:

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, U.S. Code 2000-d (Code of Federal Regulations, Part 21: the Std. Title VI); Executive Order 13160 of June 23, 2000; Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC), 14684 (h); California Code of Regulations Title 9, Chapter 11; Department of Health and Human Services- Office of Minority Health: National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health Care.

Related Policies:

“Interpretation Services by Family Members” Policy and Procedure No. 01-03 from Quality Management.

Enter X	DL Name	Enter X	DL Name
X	Behavioral Health Staff	X	Mental Health Treatment Center
X	SUPT Contracted Providers	X	Mental Health Contracted Providers

Contact Information:

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