

Interpretation and Communication Assistance

Procedure Policy

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General Description

Scope: Patients, their family members or *personal representatives* who need assistance communicating with staff members regarding health care issues due to vision, speech, hearing or cognitive impairments.

Purpose: To provide instructions for staff on how to access communication assistance services.

Who Performs: All VCUHS staff

When to Perform: Once a staff member becomes aware that a patient, their family member or personal representative is in need of communication assistance.

Requirements

Definitions: **Communication Aid**

Anything which assists with facilitating communication to include foreign or sign language interpretation, as well as devices such as magnifiers or hearing aid compatible phones.

OCL

Office of Communication and Language Services

Off-Hours

Monday-Friday before 8:00 a.m. and after 4:00 p.m., Weekends, Federal and State Holidays.

Personal Representative

An individual who has the legal authority to exercise a patient's rights with respect to health care including, but not limited to, health care decision-making or access to the patient's health information.

Vital Documents

Informed Consent, Discharge Instructions and Advance Directives

Forms/Documents

Request Forms for on-site foreign language or American Sign Language interpreters, document translation or Video Interpreter Service are available on the Office of Communication and Language Service website.

OCL will submit an annual report to the Director of Regulatory Affairs detailing the hospital's use of interpreters and communication aids.

Other Items Staff responsible for providing health care services will be trained on the use of the Video Interpreter Service at orientation and annually thereafter.

Warnings and Precautions

- Attention:**
- A. It is not a violation of HIPAA to provide patient information to certified interpreters.
 - B. On-site foreign language interpreter requests must be made at least 24 hours in advance to ensure greater availability.
 - C. On-site sign language interpreter requests must be made at least three (3) days in advance to ensure greater availability.

Please be aware:

- A. All hospital provided on-site foreign language interpreters must be have a certificate of completion of Medical Interpreter Competency training (MIC) on file with OCL.
- B. All hospital provided on-site sign language interpreters must have certification on file with the Virginia Department of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH).
- C. Staff will not translate health care information while on duty unless they have successfully completed MIC training. (See Attachment-MIC Certification Information)
- D. Staff who have a MIC certificate on file with OCL do not need to to have another interpreter present when discussing or translating health care information with someone who speaks their target language.

Detailed Steps

A. Identification of Need

1. All patients will be asked/assessed as to any communication needs during registration/admission and the answer entered into the appropriate field in IDX or Cerner.
2. Communication needs which develop or are discovered during treatment will also be entered into the patient's medical record.
3. If *Communication Aids* are needed/requested, staff will provide notification that:
 - a. Communication Aids are provided at no cost and
 - b. VCUHS discourages the use of family members or friends as interpreters.
4. If a patient does not want to use a trained interpreter and/or other *Communication Aid*, staff will document refusal in the medical record.

NOTE: Staff should offer communication assistance for each new visit/admission as a refusal of a communication aid for one visit does not necessarily mean refusal for all future visits or admissions.

5. Staff may insist upon the use of a hospital interpreter or *Communication Aid* if it is determined by the provider to be in the best interest of the patient. It is suggested that staff use Communication Aids when:
 - discussing *Vital Documents*, "Do Not Resuscitate" orders, end of life care, treatment options, diagnosis or prognosis
 - obtaining a History and Physical or medication reconciliation
 - staff determine that it is appropriate due to the sensitive or complex nature of the information

B. Non-English Speaking

1. How to request a hospital interpreter

- a. Less than 24 hours notice of need for interpreter
 - 1) Between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. call OCL at 628-1116
 - 2) During *Off Hours* call one of the PRN On-Site Foreign Language Interpreters listed on "Communication and Language Services" intranet site.
- b. 24 hours or greater notice of need for interpreter
 - 1) Go to "Communication and Language Services" intranet site.
 - 2) Click on "Request Forms" on the Left side of the screen.
 - 3) Submit request form for "On-Site Foreign Language Interpreter".

2. If an on-site hospital interpreter is not available

- a. Staff will use the blue dual hand-set Cyacom interpreter phone or other similar system, approved for their area.
 - 1) Every clinic and unit will have at least one interpreter phone available for use.
 - 2) To obtain an interpreter phone system go to the "Request Forms" link on the "Communication and Language" site and click on "Request Forms".
- b. Staff will use their best efforts to provide the most effective communication possible until an appropriate interpreter is available.

3. Required Documentation

- a. Staff will document their attempts to obtain an interpreter and the results.
- b. When using an on-site or telephone interpreter, staff will note in the medical record:
 - 1) interpreter's name,
 - 2) identification number, if phone, and
 - 3) nature of the communication
- c. All consent forms must contain the signature, printed name and contact information of the interpreter providing sight translation. By signing the interpreter is stating that they have translated this document to the best of their ability.

4. Translation of Documents

- a. Free translated *Vital Documents* are available from OCL with advance notice, and will be offered to individuals who need them. To have documents translated:
 - 1) Go to "Communication and Language Services" intranet site.
 - 2) Click on "Request Forms" on the Left side of the screen.
 - 3) Submit request form for "Document Translation".
- b. OCL coordinates the translation of all *Vital Documents* as well as the following:
 - Medical Record Forms
 - VCUHS required signage
 - Marketing materials
 - any document intended for patient information or education

Trained interpreters may directly translate simple instructions such as those for discharge or patient care.

C. Deaf or Hearing Impaired using sign language

Please Note: VCUHS is only able to access interpreters for American Sign Language and Cued Speech.

Dial 711 to call and speak with patients who have a TTY or similar device.

1. How to request a hospital interpreter

- a. Three (3) days notice or greater of need for an interpreter
 - 1) Go to "Communication and Language Services" intranet site.
 - 2) Click on "Request Forms" on the Left side of the screen.
 - 3) Submit request form for "Sign Language Interpreter".
- b. Less than Three (3) days notice of need for an interpreter
 - 1) Between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., call OCL at 628-1116.
 - 2) During *Off Hours* staff need to call a sign language interpreter directly. Contact information for interpreters is on the "Communication and Language Service" intranet site under "Sign Language Interpreters".
- c. If an interpreter is scheduled but has not yet arrived, staff may use the Video Interpreter Service, but only until the interpreter is available.

2. If an on-site hospital interpreter is not available

- a. After best efforts have been made to obtain an on-site interpreter and no one is available, staff will then use the Video Interpreter Service (VIS) for sign language interpretation.
- b. Video Interpreter Service is not appropriate in some circumstances. An on-site interpreter should be used if at all possible for individuals:
 - who have limited ability to move their heads, hands or arms
 - who have cognitive or consciousness issues
 - who are to be treated in rooms where space issues preclude use of Video Interpreter Service
- c. How to request a Video Interpreter Service monitor.
 - 1) Video Interpreter Service is available seven (7) days a week, twenty-four (24) hours a day and is available for use on short notice for emergency situations.
 - a) Between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.
 - i. Go to "Communication and Language Services" intranet site.
 - ii. Click on "Request Forms" on the Left side of the screen.
 - iii. Submit request form for "Sign Language Video Conferencing"
 - iv. The video unit should be delivered within the hour.
 - b) During *Off Hours* call Service Response at 628-4772. The video unit should be delivered within 90 minutes and a Biomedical Engineering employee will set up the device.
 - 2) For technical problems with the unit call Biomedical Engineering at 628-4772.
 - 3) Biomedical Engineering and the vendor will maintain the system to ensure that the device provides a clear picture of the interpreter and deaf individual's head, arms, hands and fingers and that voices being transmitted are clear and easily understood.

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3. **If an on-site hospital interpreter and a video conferencing monitor are not available**
 - If after best efforts have been made and staff are unable to provide an on-site interpreter and VIS is inappropriate or unavailable, ONLY THEN is communication through note writing appropriate.
4. **Required Documentation**
 - a. Staff will document their attempts to obtain an interpreter and the results.
 - b. When using an on-site or video interpreter, staff will note in the medical record:
 - 1) interpreters name and
 - 2) nature of the communication.
 - c. All consent forms must contain the signature, printed name and contact information of the interpreter. By signing the interpreter is stating that they have translated this document to the best of their ability.
5. **Translation of Documents**
 - Free American Sign Language or Cued speech translation of *vital documents* is available through on-site interpreters. See #1 above, "How to request a hospital interpreter".

D. Deaf or Hearing Impaired not using sign language

1. TTY devices and hearing aid compatible amplified telephones are available from the Service Response Center, call 628-2447.
2. Call 711 to call and speak with patients who have a TTY or similar device.
3. All patient televisions should have a Closed Caption option available, for assistance contact the Service Response Center.

E. Blind or Vision Impaired

F. Speech Impaired

G. Cognitively Impaired

Troubleshooting

Common Problems: Patient's who need language assistance when making clinic appointments should contact the Call Center at 828-7069.

For Clinics which do not use the Call Center access to a telephone interpreter can be set up by OCL, please contact them at 628-1116.

How to get help: For problems with Video Interpreter Service call the Service Response Center at 628-4772.

Attachments

MCI Certification Information

Medical Interpreter Competency Training

VCU Health System Office of Language Services offers two interpreter training programs.

For more information go to the Office of Communication and Language Services intranet site and click on “Education” on the Left of the screen.