

University Health Network Policy & Procedure Manual Clinical – Interpretation & Translation Services

Policy

University Health Network (UHN) recognizes that all patients have the right to informed decision-making about their health care and requires clinical staff to utilize Interpretation and Translation Services (ITS) to help deliver quality care, enhance patient-centred care, reduce risk and to help improve overall clinical outcomes.

UHN is committed to providing quality health care interpretation services to [Limited English Proficiency \(LEP\)](#) patients and their family members. UHN's Interpretation and Translation Services (ITS) provides [interpretation](#) (verbal) and [translation](#) (written) services to all UHN programs and services, to facilitate communication between health care providers and LEP or deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing patients and their families.

Interpretation Services

Best practice guidelines dictate the use of trained interpreters. ITS's health care interpreters are trained; abide by a professional code of ethics, and UHN's confidentiality and privacy policies. ITS also utilizes external contract health care interpreters who are assessed and trained in health care interpretation. They are utilized for languages that are less frequently requested at UHN and that are not readily available in-house. These interpreters also abide by the same professional standards and ethics. Other forms of informal interpretation services and overhead paging for untrained staff who speak various languages is strongly **discouraged**.

ITS provides health care interpretation for **research projects**. The primary investigator is responsible for paying the hourly fee of the interpreter plus a nominal administrative processing charge.

ITS provides health care interpretation services for **international patients** (e.g., patients with pre-arranged payment, those without OHIP or those who have private insurance) who are LEP. ITS bills the requestor of the service (see [Non-residents & Uninsured Residents of Canada](#) policy 1.90.011).

The response to immediate requests will be based on the availability of Interpreters who speak that specific language and who are on site. In-house staff interpreters are available for the following languages: Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

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Every effort will be made to provide services for all **other** languages through external resources available at the time of the request. ITS also provides for American Sign Language Interpreters on contract or from OIS–Canadian Hearing Society. All aforementioned interpreters must follow the departmental ITS policy for Contracted Interpreters.

It is recognized that UHN has culturally specific programs (such as Portuguese & Asian Mental Health) that often reflects the population it serves. No interpreter is required when the clinician is employed in these types of programs and is required to speak in the same language as the care being delivered. In addition, no interpreter is required when a staff provides direct patient care in the same language of the patient. To do so the staff must use professional judgment to self determine competency in that language. (See [Guide Statement on Language](#) in Workplace Diversity on the Human Resources web site.)

It is the responsibility of the clinician to document the interpretation interaction and the full name of the person utilized to interpret the clinical interaction, as specifically as possible, i.e., relationship to patient, or UHN interpreter or staff member.

Cancellation of an Interpreter

Interpreters services requires a minimum of 48 hours’ notice to cancel an appointment, whenever possible, to maximize resources within the ITS budget. (If external resources are arranged and are not cancelled within this timeframe, ITS is still charged for the service.)

If there are three or more occurrences of the same booking from the same department (with no cancellations within the 48-hour timeframe), and the problem is not a no-show or patient illness, the department may incur the external resource charges.

Other Interpretation Resources

[Language Line](#)

ITS also facilitates access to Language Line, a professional telephone-based interpretation service, available 24 hours, 7 days a week. Departments interested in obtaining this service may request it by contacting the ITS Coordinator or Manager. There is no charge for setup or installation.

Presently, there are some Language Lines available at designated UHN sites. Staff are advised to use the Language Line for urgent, after-hours or weekend interpretation needs.

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Language line phone calls must be carried out as conference calls between the telephone interpreter, medical professional and patient unless the department has a dual handset telephone. Dual handset telephones help to facilitate confidentiality of the patient and family members, and can be acquired, if requested, by the department. ITS pays for the basic line fee but each department is charged internally for its individual calls, by the minute.

MedBridge Computer Software

MedBridge, which is a communication computer program, can be used in the absence of an interpreter. This interactive program (that talks to patients) may be used to facilitate the communication with LEP patients (up to 16 languages) for a basic immediate clinical assessment. MedBridge can also print out discharge instructions in the patient's language, as well as a transcript for the patient's chart. The software has interactive video (using American Sign Language) for patients who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. ITS will arrange installation of the program, upon request, without a fee. The [Appropriate Use of Technology](#) policy 1.20.014 and [Privacy](#) policy 1.40.007 apply.

Translation Services

UHN is committed to providing quality-translated documents for the purpose of education, information and informed consent to [Limited English Proficiency \(LEP\)](#) patients and their family members. UHN's Interpretation and Translation Services (ITS) provides qualified translation services to all UHN programs and services, to facilitate understanding of health education and promotion, clinical diagnostic and procedures, as well as informed consent to LEP patients and their families.

UHN contracted translators are qualified individuals with recognized competency and proven experience in the field.

UHN recognizes that all patients have the right to informed decision-making about their health care and encourages clinical and non-clinical departments and staff to translate written patient education and informational materials, to assist in the delivery of quality, enhanced patient-centred care, reduce risk and to help improve overall clinical outcomes.

ITS also assists in the translation of written documents for **research projects**. The primary investigator is responsible for paying the costs for the translation plus an administrative processing charge.

ITS maintains a current list of qualified translators as well as competitive prices within the market.

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- Staff must use an approved ITS translator to translate all UHN written materials to ensure quality standards.
- Before sending documents for translation, Translating Your Materials on the UHN Patient Education Network should be reviewed at http://intranet.uhn.ca/education/patient_ed/materials/translating_materials.asp.

Definitions

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) – A legal term referring to a level of English proficiency that is insufficient to ensure equal access to medical services without a health care interpreter.

Interpretation – Is the act of verbal communication, which is a process of accurate transposition of spoken words from one language to another.

Translation – Is the act of translating a written expression, of the meaning of a word, speech, book, etc in another language.

Procedure

Interpretation Services

1. The health care provider or designate must determine the need for an interpreter and identify the language required as soon as the patient is admitted or **before** an outpatient appointment is confirmed.
2. Contact Interpretation Services (ITS) to book an interpreter as soon as possible in order to ensure that the request is filled in a timely fashion.
3. To request an interpreter:
 - Call Interpretation Services at 13-6400, press 1 to book an interpreter, or
 - Complete the Interpretation Service Request Form from UHN Interpretation & Translation Services Intranet web site at http://intranet.uhn.ca/departments/interpretation_services/.

Note: UHN interpreters service all three sites and, therefore, may be booked with appointments all day at the three sites. Patients requiring interpretation services should be seen as soon as the interpreter arrives

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to facilitate timeliness of the interpreter attending his/her next appointment.

4. Make any changes or confirmations of appointments with the **ITS Secretary**, as soon as possible, at 13-6400, (press 1) not with the individual interpreters.
5. Provide a minimum of 4 to 6 weeks advance notice when requesting a Contract American Sign Language interpreter. (This is due to the high demands for this type of contract service within the GTA.) These services will be paid for by ITS only if arranged through ITS.

Language Line Set-up

1. To use the Language Line available in an area, contact the Manager/Team Leader for access to a designated code and ID number.
2. If a Language Line is not available in an area, contact the Coordinator or Manager of UHN Interpreter Services to request installation. For more information on Language Lines see After-hours or Alternative Interpreter Service at http://intranet.uhn.ca/departments/interpretation_services/language_line.asp.

MedBridge Set-up

For information on setting up the MedBridge software in an area, contact the ITS Manager at 13-2544.

Translation Services

1. After the final draft of the English document requiring translation is approved, establish if the document falls under the category of **patient education** or **general information**.
 - If it is **patient education** material, edit it for plain language (see Publishing with PEN on the Patient Education Network at http://intranet.uhn.ca/education/patient_ed/) then submit it for translation through the submission form found within Publishing with PEN.

After being translated, the patient education material is sent back to the requestor via the PEN process for the standard PEN Evaluation Process by patients.

- If the document is considered **general information** (such as a letter), complete the [Translation Service Request Form](#) on the ITS Intranet web site or email Lisete.Figueiredo@uhn.on.ca and attach the document. If the document is a

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letter or other general material, the ITS Coordinator returns the translated document directly to the author.

2. The author of the document may trial the translated version with his/her patients/clients in order to assess the level of understanding of the translated document.
 - If patients/clients **consistently** identify different wording that reflects a more regional or colloquial form of expression the author contacts the ITS Coordinator to explain and request changes.
3. The ITS Coordinator provides a quotation of the cost if requested.
4. ITS bills the requestor's cost centre number internally.

References

1. Olivia Carter-Pokras, Marla, J.F. et al. Providing Linguistically Appropriate Services to Persons With Limited English Proficiency: A Needs and Resources Investigation. American Journal of Managed Care, September 2004.
2. Ed. Chen-Hrn, Alice Language Barriers in Health Care Settings: An Annotated Bibliography of the Research Literature. The California Endowment August 2003
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4. Blake C. Ethical Considerations in Working with Culturally Diverse Populations: The Essential Role of Professional Interpreters. CPA Bulletin de l'APC, Montreal, Quebec. June 2003.

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