

Section 15

Cultural & Linguistic Services Program



The Alliance is committed to delivering culturally and linguistically appropriate health care services to its diverse membership. The goal of the Cultural & Linguistic Services Program (CLSP) is to ensure that all Alliance members—regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, creed, ancestry, ethnic backgrounds, language, marital status, English proficiency, age, health status, physical and mental disability, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity or identification with any other persons or groups—all have equal access to quality healthcare and that covered services are provided in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. The CLSP encompasses language assistance services for members; and cultural competency, sensitivity, and diversity training of staff, providers, and subcontractors. Please see Policy [405-3101 - Cultural and Linguistic Services Program](#) for more information.

Providers shall recognize and integrate members' practices and beliefs about disease causation and prevention into the provision of Covered Services; comply with Plan's Language Assistance Program standards developed under California Health and Safety Code Section 1367.04 and Title 28 CCR Section 1300.67.04; and cooperate with the Alliance by providing any information necessary to assess compliance.

Language Assistance Program / Interpreter Services

Under federal and state law, all Limited English Proficient (LEP) health plan members are entitled to free language assistance when accessing health care services. In addition, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that persons who are deaf or hard of hearing be offered free communication assistance when accessing healthcare services. The Alliance covers interpreter services for all LEP, deaf or hard of hearing members. The Alliance contracts with pre-approved and qualified agencies to provide these services. Providers and members are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the Alliance's free interpreter services, as the Alliance does not reimburse for services that are not offered by the Alliance.

Telephonic Interpreter Services

- Telephonic interpreter services for LEP members can be accessed by providers for all Alliance-covered services through approved vendors. No prior approval is required.
- Providers may access a telephonic interpreter directly 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Face-to-Face Interpreter Services

- Face-to-face interpretation is approved for all covered services for deaf or hard of hearing members, and approved for LEP members only under special circumstances.
- Prior approval and scheduling is required for all face-to-face interpreting services. Providers can request prior approval and schedule these services by submitting the Interpreter Request Form on the [Cultural and Linguistic Services page](#) of the Alliance provider website.
- A minimum of 7 business days for all standard (non-urgent) American Sign Language (ASL) requests.
- A minimum of 10 business days for all standard Non-ASL requests (e.g. foreign language).

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- Urgent requests can be submitted at any time, and will be reviewed immediately upon receipt. A determination will be made within one (1) business day.

For instructions on how to access telephonic and face-to-face interpreter services, including the approved vendors, please download the [Interpreter Services Quick Reference Guide](#). Please see Policy [405-3103 - Interpreter Services](#) for more information.

Summary of Providers Responsibilities and Requirements

- Due to the complex and sensitive nature of medical care, it is not appropriate to use unqualified bilingual persons as interpreters.
- The Alliance strongly discourages the use of unqualified interpreters, including bilingual office staff or patients' friends or family members, especially minors.
- Providers are required to document every patient's preferred language in the medical record and to offer LEP and deaf or hard of hearing patients a qualified interpreter at no cost to the patient.
- Providers must not require patients to bring their own interpreters or suggest that they use a friend or family member to interpret.
- Providers are required to document the offer of and patient acceptance or refusal of interpreter services in the medical record.
- Federal and state laws require medical providers to offer qualified interpreters when needed. Using an untrained interpreter may result in miscommunication of medical information and compromise quality of care.

For a brief summary of federal and state laws related to language assistance, the use of interpreters, and cultural competence, please visit the [Cultural and Linguistic Services page](#) of the Alliance provider website.