

# Notice of Communication and Language Assistance Services Worksheet

## Determine the content of your organization's public notice of available services

- Consult the relevant federal and local laws and regulations in your area that apply to your organization
- Post what communication and language assistance services are available, to whom services are available, how to access the services, the benefits of using the services, and that communication and language assistance services are provided by the organization free of charge
- Determine if notice of communication and language assistance services should be available in multiple languages
- Ensure that notice is written using simple wording that can be understood at a low literacy level (e.g., sixth grade)

## Decide how to provide notice of communication and language assistance services

- Create multilingual signs, posters, brochures, and materials in the most common languages spoken by the communities you serve announcing the availability of communication and language assistance services
- Attach notice of available communication and language assistance services to the front of *any* written materials given to individuals accessing care or services at your organization.<sup>1</sup>
- Convey information orally or through signage using symbols or pictures, especially for those who may not be literate<sup>2</sup>
- Utilize liaisons such as cultural mediators or community health workers
- Educate the community about what services it has to offer them using materials and messages that are easy to read and appropriately and respectfully reflect the diversity of your community
  - Create a task force coordinated by an external organization
  - Form good relationships with surrounding providers
  - Participate in community events
  - Distribute information about your communication and language assistance services to local health departments, community-based organizations, community churches and other religious organizations, schools, and other stakeholders<sup>1,3</sup>
- Utilize telephone communication and voicemail
- Collaborate with non-English media, such as TV, newspapers, and radio
- Ensure that your organization's website is also easily available in the most common languages spoken by the communities you serve
- Share notice on social networking sites

## Decide where to provide notice of communication and language assistance services

- Identify areas of your organization that serve the highest volumes of individuals who could benefit from these services<sup>1</sup>
- Include central and clearly visible areas of your facility<sup>2</sup>
  - Registration desks
  - Front desks
  - Waiting rooms
  - Financial screening rooms
  - Pharmacies or areas where patients pick up prescriptions
  - Areas where clinical work is performed, such as triage and medical exam rooms

## Create policies and procedures for refusal of communication and language assistance services

- If an individual refuses the communication and language assistance services you offer, ask him/her to sign a form stating they understand services are available and choose to decline them
  - Ensure the form is available and signed in the individual's native language or completed orally if the individual is unable to read in their native language
- If an individual refuses the language assistance services provided, and instead prefers to use an untrained individual such as a relative or friend, the name and relationship of this individual should also be documented
  - This procedure is precautionary in case any issues arise regarding whether certain information was provided to and understood by the individual receiving care or services from your organization<sup>3</sup>

## Decide how to train (and refresh) your staff on communication policies and procedures

- Review organizational policies and procedures governing effective communication and language assistance services with all staff, including leadership, governance, providers, and volunteers
- Describe the benefits of using appropriate communication skills and implementing language assistance services in your organization
- Describe accepted approaches to facilitate effective communication, such as the teach-back approach
- Share guidance on working effectively and building trust with everyone involved in providing language assistance services
- Share guidance on maintaining individuals' confidentiality of those receiving care or services
- Describe the process of interpreting for individuals new to the organization, and review the process as a refresher for current staff
- Instruct staff on how to access and use interpreting technology (e.g. phones or video) and appropriate written materials for populations with communication needs
- Instruct staff on protocol for when communication and language assistance services are refused
- Describe federal requirements for language assistance services to staff
- Hold staff discussions about the importance of engaging stakeholders such as community members in the planning and implementation of language assistance services

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights. (2003). *Guidance to federal financial assistance recipients regarding Title VI and the prohibition against national origin discrimination affecting limited English proficient persons: Summary*. Retrieved from <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/resources/laws/summaryguidance.html>

<sup>2</sup> Kashiwagi, S. (2004). *A functional manual for providing linguistically competent health care services as developed by a community health center*. Los Angeles, CA: Asian Pacific Health Care Venture, Inc.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. (2005b). *Health care professionals' perspectives on the content and structure of the draft Health Care Language Services Implementation Guide*. Developed by the American Institutes for Research. Rockville, MD: Author.

*Guide to Providing Effective Communication and Language Assistance Services*

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