WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH INTERPRETERS
FLUENCY PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA)

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the advantages for patient satisfaction and safety of working with a qualified interpreter.
- Describe the requirements for reducing language barriers.
- Define the relative roles of the provider, patient, and interpreter.

**GOAL**

To improve communication with patients who have Limited English Proficiency by learning techniques for working with interpreters.
### THE NECESSITY TO USE LANGUAGE SERVICES

#### Health Care
- Quality

#### Demographics
- Increase in Limited English Proficient (LEP) Patients

#### Regulatory
- Federal law
  - Title VI of Civil Rights Act
- CLAS Standards
- State law
  - Minnesota statutes
- Accreditation mandates
  - JCAHO

#### Patient/Financial
- Reduce ER use
- Reduce unnecessary admissions
- Decrease diagnostic test costs

---

THE RATIONALE

Patients with language barriers:

- Have longer hospital stays
- Make fewer visits and receive fewer preventive services
- Are less likely to use or return to clinics
- Score lower on health knowledge and understanding of diagnosis and treatment
- Are less satisfied

LEP PATIENTS WHO NEED, BUT DO NOT GET INTERPRETERS:

Are more likely to receive intravenous hydration and to be admitted to the hospital (Hampers and McNulty 2002)

Are at greater risk of being discharged from the emergency department without a follow-up appointment (Sarver and Baker 2000)

Have more tests done, creating a higher overall cost (Hampers and McNulty 2002)
USE OF TRAINED INTERPRETERS WAS ASSOCIATED WITH:

- Lower admission rates from the ED (Hampers and McNulty 2002)
- A decrease in utilization disparities for outpatient preventive services (Jacobs et al. 2001)
- Reduced ED return and referral rates (Bernstein et al. 2002)
GUIDELINES FOR WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH INTERPRETERS

Before the Appointment:

1. Make sure that you are working with a qualified interpreter and not a family member or friend.

2. Brief the interpreter on what to expect in the meeting, where necessary.

3. Plan enough time – it may take longer than an English-only appointment.

GUIDELINES FOR WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH INTERPRETERS

During the Appointment:

- Be aware of the education level and/or health literacy of your patient in order to phrase your message at an appropriate level.

- Avoid using acronyms and idioms.

- You are communicating THROUGH the interpreter but TO the patient.

- Dealing with cultural differences and the personality of the patient is primarily your job, not the interpreter’s.
CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCES

Some examples of things to keep in mind regarding cultural and linguistic differences:

- There may be less eye contact with the patient than you customarily expect;
- A smile or nod on the part of the patient may not indicate total agreement.
IN SUMMARY

Using trained interpreters may:

- Improve patients’ health outcomes
- Improve patients’ primary care utilization
- Increase patients’ perceived understanding of their care
- Increase patient and provider satisfaction
- Reduce medical complications
- Lower the cost of care in the long run

Interpreter Services Workgroup report, Feb 2008
THANK YOU

Rosemond Sarpong Owens, MPH, CDM
rosemond.owens@bluecrossmn.com

Upper Midwest Translators & Interpreters Association

➢ https://umtia.org/