

## **University of Massachusetts Medical Center Interpreter Services Program (USA/Private)**

<http://www.umassmemorial.org/MedicalcenterIP.cfm?id=2353>

### **Section I: Summary**

The University of Massachusetts Medical Center (UMMC) recognizes the special needs and concerns of individuals who are members of linguistic and culturally diverse groups, have limited English proficiency (LEP), or are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH). It is UMMC policy to maintain a system whereby interpreter services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week to help UMMC providers communicate with persons of LEP or persons who are DHH, at no cost to the patient. Provision of professional trained interpreter services is mandated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to ensure proper and complete medical assessment of the patient, informed consent, treatment plans, patient education, conflict resolution, and other patient rights.

### **Section II: Statement of purpose**

#### **Appointment/Requests System**

The Interpreter Services Office (ISO) provides interpreters for all requests scheduled through a computerized appointment system, as well as for non-scheduled appointments to all UMMC areas including emergency room and inpatient areas. In addition to person to person encounters, the ISO provides telephone services to patients who need to contact their providers to request prescription refills, arrange for a sick visit, or have any other request pertaining to their follow up care. Also, patients can call when they need to reschedule or to cancel appointments. The ISO makes phone calls to all scheduled patients to remind them of their appointments.

#### **Services Provided**

*Bilingual Interpretation.* Interpreter services offered by UMMC are provided by trained and qualified bilingual medical interpreters (FTE's and per diem) employed by the UMMC Interpreter Services Office (ISO). "On call" trained and qualified bilingual medical interpreters primarily to serve on holidays, weekends, and Monday through Friday between the hours of 7:00 PM and 8:00 AM. Students, employees, and volunteers at UMMC who have been trained and/or are qualified to provide bilingual medical interpretation and do so on a voluntary basis. AT&T Language Line, primarily to serve emergencies in languages not common to the UMMC population and to the Worcester community is available to patients.

#### **Sign Language Interpretation**

Certified sign language interpreters are requested to and provided by the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The ISO is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

### **Communication**

A key element in the proper functioning of this ISO communication system is the bilingual (Spanish/English) dispatcher (76% of all telephone requests come from Spanish-speaking callers). The coordinator assigns the appropriate interpreter to resolve telephone requests. Interpreters regularly call to update the dispatcher about the status of the patients and providers with whom they are working. The dispatcher considers carefully before paging an interpreter so as not to interrupt an interpreting session in progress. The dispatcher utilizes the pager system only to inform interpreters when patients have arrived at a time other than when scheduled, to inform them when a provider is ready for an interpreter, or to dispatch them for an Emergency Room or inpatient request. All telephone requests are documented. All triadic interactions between patients, providers, and interpreters are documented on an encounter form which is part of the patient's medical record.

Vietnamese is the second most requested language at UMMC, the ISO has established a separate Vietnamese telephone line. This line is answered by a Vietnamese interpreter when in the office, or by a Vietnamese voice mail message that instructs the patient to leave their name and phone number so that the Vietnamese interpreter may return the call upon returning to the office.

### **Section III: Outcomes**

The coordinator of the ISO reviews encounter forms, telephone request forms, and on call interpreters forms and documents, reviews, investigates and responds to any concerns registered by UMMC staff or patients. All staff, per diem and on call interpreters are asked to fill out self-evaluation, which they discuss with the coordinator of orientation and training. An assessment of the level of expertise of each individual interpreter is made to determine in which areas of UMMC they are qualified to work.

The director, the ISO coordinator and the coordinator of orientation and training are available to discuss specific questions, problem areas, or areas that need improvement with all interpreters. The ISO has a well developed and utilized mentor system. This system allows the more experienced interpreters to share their knowledge, expertise and experiences with newly arrived and junior interpreters, which establishes and reinforces the open lines of communication throughout the ISO.

The ISO updates its policies and procedures in accordance with the changes that occur throughout the UMMC and within the ISO and in relation to the needs of the community in accessing the UMMC system.

The ISO follows the Massachusetts Medical Interpreter Association's Standards of Practice. The Director, the coordinator of ISO, and the coordinator of orientation and training have developed strategic plans, which are in place and continuously revised, to improve interpreter skills, techniques and expertise, and provide on the spot education, information and support for all members of the ISO.

The cost of the program is approximately \$480,000 annually – servicing about 40,000 interpreted encounters/year, including 16,000 face to face encounters.

**For more information contact:**

Martha Benitez, coordinator of Interpreter Services  
(508) 856- 5793

E-mail: [Martha.Benitez@Banyan.ummed.edu](mailto:Martha.Benitez@Banyan.ummed.edu)