

Fact sheet: Interpretation Services

Background

Community Medical Centers is a locally-owned, not-for-profit, public-benefit organization providing central California with three acute-care hospitals, clinics, medical imaging centers, a cancer center, a behavioral care facility and home care services.

Community is the area's largest private employer and a leader in development with construction at Community Regional Medical Center in downtown Fresno and the expansion and renovation at Clovis Community Medical Center.

Community also serves as the area's essential "safety-net" provider through its 1996 contract with Fresno County. In fiscal year 2009-2010, Community provided nearly \$174 million in unpaid services to the medically underserved and as a benefit to the community.

The need

Community serves a diverse patient population with San Joaquin Valley residents who speak hundreds of different languages and come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Many are immigrants from countries with different approaches to medical care. Nearly 16% of Community Regional Medical Center's emergency department patients are non-English speaking, which means hundreds of interpreter interactions a day are needed with patients and their families. Community is not reimbursed for these services.

For patients, having a care team member who speaks their language gives a sense of comfort and maintains dignity. Patients' language needs are identified during pre-operative appointments and phone calls, when they register at a facility or are admitted to the hospital. Also, referring primary care physicians are asked to provide information on the language needs of patients. Non-English speaking hospital patients wear a wristband listing their primary language.

Patient services

Interpreter services are provided at Community facilities 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Community relies on certified in-house interpreters, interpreters from the Health Care Interpreter Network (HCIN), American Sign Language services and the Language Line, which has 3,000 interpreters and 170 available languages.

Employees called "Language Ambassadors" volunteer to help patients and families with non-medical-related questions in their native language. Bilingual employees wear a special employee badge to indicate to patients and visitors which additional language they speak and can assist with interpreting. Languages spoken by these employees include Spanish, Hindi, Hmong, Punjabi, Farsi, Vietnamese and Filipino.

In 2009, Community Regional took another important step to enhance the quality of patient services by joining HCIN, a cooperative of California hospitals and health care providers who share trained health care interpreters through an automated video/telephonic call center system. Videoconferencing devices and telephones throughout each hospital connect, often within a minute, to an interpreter on the HCIN system, either at Community Regional or one of the other participating hospitals.

Community Regional has five full-time Spanish interpreters, two per-diem Spanish interpreters, and one per-diem Hmong interpreter. They are available over the shared HCIN and in-person interpretation sessions.

Fiscal year 2010-2011

Phone/in-person translation sessions	44,263
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