

Tufts Medical Center Hospital-Wide Policy	Subject: Interpreter Services	File Under: 1032
Issuing Department Interpreter Services		Latest Revision Date: August, 2014 Latest Reviewed Date:
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I. Purpose

The mission of the Interpreter Services Department is to facilitate linguistic and cultural communication and understanding between the providers of Tufts Medical Center and the patients and their families via face-to-face, video, telephonic interpretations and written translations.

II. Eligibility

Interpreting Services are available to anyone present or visiting our facilities be they staff, employee, patient or family member.

III. Policy

Tufts Medical Center is fully committed to providing quality health care to all those who come to its doors, including both the deaf and hard of hearing and non-English or limited-English speakers. Federal and State legislation mandates the use of trained and competent interpreters for patients who do not speak or have limited knowledge of English. In accordance with this mandate, Tufts Medical Center Interpreter Services Department prides itself in having an excellent team of trained, professional medical interpreters available at no cost to patients, throughout the hospital 24 hours a day, seven days a week to serve the needs of the hospital staff, patients and their families. Medical interpreting is a profession that requires training, experience, skills, knowledge of medical terminology, the Standards of Practice, and the Code of Ethics, as well as language fluency and proficiency in both English and the patient’s language. For this reason, family members, minor children, or friends of the patient are not appropriate interpreters, and should not be asked to interpret, unless the medical situation is considered to be life threatening and no professional interpreters are available.

a) Policy on Interpreter Requests

All requests for interpreting services must be made through the Interpreting Services Department, **never** with the interpreter directly (except after hours and weekends when the Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish and other languages on-call interpreters can be reached by pager). The requests can be made via phone, on-line, fax and e-mail.

b) Policy on Translation of Vital Documents

Vital documents such as consent forms, patient education materials, advanced directives, financial and program application forms and discharge instructions should be made available in translation for the major language groups served by the hospital. When no translation is available for a particular language, the medical provider will explain the content of the document to the patient with the assistance of an interpreter. It is not appropriate to have an interpreter orally translate a document because translating a complex document requires time, profound knowledge of the subject matter and a whole set of skills that an interpreter might not possess. The medical provider that is familiar with the content of the document should explain it in layman terms to the patient with the assistance of the interpreter. Translation requests are handled separately from interpretation requests. Depending on the nature and volume of the requests, Interpreter Services will decide how the request is going to be fulfilled, either by internal translators or outside vendors.

c) Policy on Documentation

According to Massachusetts law, hospitals are required to track the language of the patients they serve in the hospital's information system. The patient's language and need for interpreting services should also appear prominently in the patient's record, so that all those who see the patient can know ahead of time that a medical interpreter needs to be requested and scheduled for all appointments. The need for an interpreter and the language of the patient should also be mentioned when referring patients to other departments. Interpreter stickers help strengthen the documentation policy.

d) Policy on American Sign Language Interpreters

ASL interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing patients are accessed through the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH). At least two weeks advance notice is required for scheduled requests. For emergency, urgent and unscheduled requests, the MCDHH Emergency Service Line is contacted.

Tufts Medical Center has set up the Deaf Talk System, an on-demand video service to supplement the need of these patients. This service greatly enhances the ability for the hospital to deliver the needed services. Requests for sign language interpreters should be submitted through the Interpreters Office as noted below.

Interpreter Services will assist setting up the Deaf Talk machine with the hospital wireless system. After using the machine, the person who requested the service needs

to call Interpreter Services to pick up the machine and send it back to the ED medicine room where it is stationed.

IV. Procedure

The Interpreter Services Department is made up of full and part time staff interpreters as well as per diem and freelance interpreters. We also use Pacific Interpreters for Telephone interpreting services as a back up when no local interpreter is available. For languages regularly requested, we have staff interpreters on site available for both scheduled and emergent requests.

All on-site interpreters, be they regular staff interpreters, per diems, freelance interpreters, hospital staff from other departments or volunteers, must, besides being proficient in English and another language, have received prior training on interpreter skills, medical terminology and the medical interpreter Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.

Interpreter Services at Tufts Medical Center organizes monthly continuing education sessions for staff interpreters, freelance interpreters, and hospital staff from other departments who are interested in medical interpreting profession. Both internal and external speakers are invited to the department and a wide variety of topics are discussed.

To request an interpreter:

During office hours

(8:00 AM - 5 PM Monday through Friday)

Scheduled appointments:

Attention:

The best time to schedule an interpreter is at the same time the clinic appointment is made. The earlier the request is made the better the chances are of filling it. For optimal service, do not wait till a day or two before the appointment to request an interpreter. Interpreter Services needs time fulfilling the requests. For languages that the in-house staff interpreters don't provide, the Department needs to contact per diems for their availabilities. Therefore, the more lead time the Department gets, the better the chance the request can be fulfilled. So always strive to notify the Department as soon as possible.

Request forms to schedule an interpreter are available for downloading from our website on Tufts Medical Center's Intranet.

Requesting an interpreter:

Requests can be faxed (x6-6283), emailed (NE General Services Interpreter Appointments) or phoned (x6-5547) into our office. ***Requests for service made less than 2 weeks in advance should always be phoned in.***

Same day service:

Requests for same day service should be telephoned into the office (6-5547) as soon as the need for an interpreter is known. The Department will make every attempt to fill the request in a timely fashion. The Department might be able to send an interpreter if available. Otherwise the Department will connect the requester to an interpreter over the phone.

In emergency situations:

Clearly state that you are calling about an emergency situation for which an interpreter is needed immediately (*STAT*). An interpreter will be pulled from a booked appointment and dispatched immediately. If there is no interpreter on site for the particular language requested and one cannot come to the hospital within an acceptable time frame, then an interpreter will be accessed by telephone through Pacific Interpreters.

Grievance Procedures:

Interpreter Services provides for affiliated clinics and satellite sites the support needed for grievance procedures, when individuals have limited English proficiency.

Contact Information for both Internal and External:

Address: Tufts Medical Center
Interpreter Services Department
800 Washington Street, #447
Boston, MA 02111
Telephone: 617-636-5547

After hours and weekends:

Weekdays: 5 PM - 8 AM

Weekends: Friday 5 PM - Monday 8 AM

Page the appropriate on-call interpreter:	Chinese:	# 1350
	Vietnamese:	# 1003
	Spanish & Portuguese:	# 3125
	All other languages:	# 1524

Chinese & Vietnamese:

The vast majority of requests for interpreting services at Tufts Medical Center, located in the heart of Chinatown, are for Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin) and Vietnamese. For this reason, a Chinese/Vietnamese interpreter (available throughout the hospital by pager) is in-house after hours and on weekends to cover the high demand for interpreting in these languages.

Schedule of the in-house Chinese-Vietnamese-Cambodian interpreter:

Monday through Saturday: 5 PM to 10 PM

Schedule of the in-house Chinese interpreter

Saturday and Sunday: 10 AM to 5 PM

Spanish and Russian:

Spanish and Russian interpreters are also available by pager (Spanish #3125 – Russian through Other Language pager #1524) and able to come to the hospital within a short period of time, when permitted.

All other languages:

For languages less frequently requested, Interpreter Services calls from a list of freelance interpreters who may or may not accept a request to come into the hospital. In the event no local interpreter is available to come in, telephone interpreting will be used.

For all interpreter requests, please provide the following information:

- Patient's name
- Medical Record Number
- Patient's language/dialect
- Location of appointment (Department, Building, floor and room number)
- Nature of the appointment
- Expected duration of appointment
- Name of person placing the request
- Extension number of person placing the request
- Name of service provider and phone or pager number

Because of the high demand for our services, interpreters are booked throughout the day and have only a certain amount of time allotted for each appointment. **It is therefore important that the services of the interpreter be utilized during the scheduled time.**

Appointments requiring the assistance of an interpreter should be given priority when the clinic is running late, so that the interpreter can move to his/her next appointment as soon as possible. Interpreters are instructed to go to their next appointment if the patient has shown up one half hour after the scheduled time of the appointment. Interpreters will update their status if they have waited in the waiting room for 15 minutes after the scheduled time. The Dispatcher will decide if they will continue to wait or be sent to another assignment, depending on the operational needs at that moment.

Cancelled or re-scheduled appointments:

Interpreter Services (6-5547) needs to be notified immediately of any appointment change or cancellation for which an interpreter has been scheduled. Interpreter Services usually makes appointment reminder calls to non-English speaking patients a couple days before their appointments. This will facilitate efficient utilization of our limited resources. Any failure to notify the Interpreter Services of the changes will not only cause resource waste, but also cause confusion on the part of the patients and therefore lead to patients' dissatisfaction. There are many situations where the Interpreter Services is unable to reach the patients or leave a message. Therefore the clinic is advised, besides notifying the Interpreter Services, to send a letter to the patients via mail, to make sure they are aware of the changes.

Written translations:

Written translations can be requested through the Department. Any translation of hospital written materials must be approved by Interpreting Services before being made available to the general public.

To request a written translation, please call extension 6-5331 or fax your request to 6-6283 to the attention to Coordinator of Written Translations. With your request, please include your name, extension, cost center number, and timeline information.

Sight translations

When no written translation is available for a particular document, the medical provider should explain the content of the document to the patient with the assistance of an interpreter. Interpreters **are advised not** to orally translate complex documents such as consent forms, prep sheets and patient education handouts because translating such documents requires time and familiarity with the text.

Interpreters will not sign anything unless they interpreted personally. They are responsible for what they interpreted by themselves.

Interpreters **can** translate handwritten individualized discharge instructions, such as medication regimen, follow-up appointments and the like.

Ancillary Services designed to complement and enhance Provision of Interpreter Services

Hospital Brochure available in Chinese, Spanish, Russian and Vietnamese

Tufts Medical Center is made up of several buildings and a maze of corridors and numerous clinics, inpatient services and departments. The hospital has information desks and kiosks as well as maps of the facility to orient English-speaking patients through the hospital.

For non-English-speaking patients, often unfamiliar with western healthcare facilities, navigating through this system can be an insurmountable challenge. In order to facilitate access and orientation in the facility for these patients, Tufts Medical Center Interpreter Services has developed in the main languages of the hospital a brochure that contains:

- A translated map of the hospital
- A statement concerning patients' right to have an interpreter anywhere in the hospital, free of charge
- The Massachusetts Patient's Bill of Rights
- Information concerning the importance of having a primary care physician

Patient-Staff Communication Aids

Tufts Medical Center Interpreter Services has developed a patient-staff communication aid booklet to help patients and staff exchange very simple basic information that either does not require the presence of an interpreter or can be useful while awaiting the arrival of the interpreter. The booklets are bilingual, that is, in English and in one of 10 target languages: Arabic, Bosnian/Serbo-Croatian, Chinese, Haitian-Creole, Italian, Khmer/Cambodian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese. The booklet is entitled *While Awaiting the Arrival of the Interpreter* to avoid any confusion on its appropriate use. It is in no way intended to replace the services of a professional interpreter but rather to communicate simple basic needs of an inpatient, for example, "I need more blankets," or simple communication between an outpatient and staff while awaiting the arrival of the interpreter—(i.e. "Where is the restroom, please?")

The booklet is divided into 4 main sections:

Inpatient Services

1. For inpatients needing to communicate basic needs, for example "Please leave my tray; I will eat later."
2. For inpatient staff giving routine information to inpatients, for example "I need to take your temperature."

Outpatient Services

1. For outpatients making simple inquiries of clinic staff, for example "How long will I have to wait before I see the doctor?"
2. For outpatient staff giving routine information to outpatients, for example "Please be seated until we call your name."

Another section of these booklets gives hospital staff detailed information on how to access an interpreter 24 hours a day.

Tufts Medical Center interpreter Services markets these booklets to other healthcare facilities. Order forms are available upon request.

Hospital patient telephone access lines in the languages of the patients

Telephone access lines in the patient's language connect patients with an interpreter who can help them schedule or cancel an appointment, request prescription refills, obtain information or help in contacting his or her providers, etc. Information about the telephone access lines is also posted in strategic places throughout the hospital.

Presently, Tufts Medical Center has the access lines in the following languages:

Bosnian/Serbo-Croatian	636-9892
Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, Toisanese, Taiwanese, etc.)	636-5331
Haitian Creole	636-5171
Portuguese and Cape Verdean	636-5618
Russian	636-1386
Spanish	636-5618
Vietnamese	636-5765

These access telephone lines are used for routine purposes, NOT FOR EMERGENCY USE because they are not attended 24 hours a day; patients can leave messages or requests on a voice mail system if the interpreter is away from his or her desk. The messages are listened to periodically during the day and the interpreter will fill the patient's request by either contacting the medical provider or clinic for things like, scheduling or canceling appointments, asking for prescription renewals or for patient questions.

V. Phone Interpreting

Interpreter Services expanded its telephonic interpretation services, considering the increasing volume of patients, and scheduling challenges. Patients who used to have to wait a longer time to see the doctors now can see them any time when they are available with the help of an interpreter over-the-phone. The service is provided by Pacific Interpreters, a national telephonic interpreting service provider with the capability of interpreting in more than 180 different languages. The service is 24 by 7 and can be accessed via the Interpreter Services Department.

Inpatients: since inpatient units are operational 24 by 7 and the needs for interpreters are less predictable than outpatient areas, the patient care units have direct access to the telephonic service. During after-hours, nurses can directly call the service for language service if the on-call interpreter is not available or it is a language that Interpreter Services doesn't provide.

Outpatients: since outpatient units mostly operate during normal business hours when Interpreter Services staff interpreters are on-site and more resources are available. Therefore, any clinic that requests an interpreter for the same day needs to call the Interpreter Service. In this situation, Interpreter Services will triage and decide whether to send an interpreter if available or to connect to the language line. This will guarantee that the need is better served and our resources are fully utilized.

VI. Interpreting Rounding

Interpreter Rounding on Inpatient/Some Outpatient Floors

Purpose:

Interpreter rounding is designed to provide quick and targeted language service to inpatient/some outpatient floors during the day. Each interpreter is assigned one floor. The maximum time the interpreter can spend on the floor during the visit is 10-15 minutes. The reason for this is interpreters are booked with scheduled appointments. Any need beyond this timeframe should be directed to the Interpreter Services for a separate request.

How we do this:

Interpreters pick up their daily schedules and start working at 8:30am. When they have the schedules, they will have some idea of their visit time to the floor. They will do the following before the visit:

- Call the assigned floor (need to have the phone number and the person's name to call)
- Ask if there are any needs for Chinese or Vietnamese interpreting
- Arrange with the floor on the visit time

During the visit, they will need the following information:

- Patient's name
- Patient's medical record number

Note: When the interpreter completes interpreting, please help the interpreter to document the visit in the chart: the interpreter will put an interpreter sticker in the record and document the language, interpreter name, signature and the date/time.

Things to avoid:

The visit would be more productive and efficient if we could avoid the following:

- Let interpreters wait
- Providers busy with other patients
- Keep interpreter longer than the timeframe
- Change the visit time unilaterally

VII. **Medical Interpreter Code of Ethics**

Governing Principle:

An interpreter will use all available knowledge, skills and techniques to provide an accurate and understandable interpretation of all communication between the provider of medical services, the patient and other individual involved in the care and treatment of the patient.

Accuracy:

The commitment to interpreting the exact meaning of what is being said without editing, adding or deleting anything and with an awareness of the educational, cultural and regional variations; the commitment to explaining cultural differences or practices to health care providers and patients when appropriate.

Unbiasedness:

The commitment to recognizing and subsequently eliminating one's own opinions and values from the interpreting interaction.

Impartiality:

The commitment to remain a neutral third party in an interaction, not siding with any parties or individuals involved; the commitment to refrain from interpreting for patients in instances where family, close personal, or professional relationships may affect impartiality.

Education:

The commitment to improving and expanding one's knowledge of medical terminology and vocabulary in the two languages.

Discretion:

The commitment to making sound judgments in all situations so that no individual is put in jeopardy nor is the professional appropriateness of the interpreter questioned.

Professionalism:

The commitment to behaving and presenting oneself in a professional manner at all times regardless of the familiarity or unfamiliarity with individuals involved; the commitment to asking questions to clarify unfamiliar medical terms or idioms of speech without embarrassment; the commitment to admitting when you are uncertain about something and finding out its meaning.

Confidentiality:

The solemn promise to maintain all information and knowledge of individuals private from others not present in the immediate situation or relevant to the patient's care.

Humanitarianism:

The commitment to upholding humane and unprejudiced treatment between individuals; the commitment to communicating any special needs of the patient to the provider.

Qualification:

All interpreter Services employees must have successfully complete an official interpreter training. However, employees hired prior to 1998 have been "grandfathered in" and their competency is based on their past experience.

Responsibility of:

Interpreter Services

Author:

Director, Interpreter Service

Date:

August, 2014

Approved by:

Interpreter Services
Medical Board

August, 2014
July, 2012



Policy Approval Signature Page

Policy Title: Interpreter Services

Approval Signature/Title:

Date:

Chief Medical Officer
