



62 Brunswick Woods Dr.
East Brunswick, NJ 08816
phone: 732-613-4554
info@thelanguagctr.com
www.thelanguagctr.com

The One Source for a World of Translation Services

Professional On-Site Interpreters in the Healthcare Industry

Many communities celebrate ethnic diversity, and the variety of languages spoken can pose a challenge for a hospital where medical staff needs to discuss critical and confidential information with patients. Not all hospitals track patient language preferences or have staff to coordinate language services. Many continue to rely on bilingual staff that is untrained in the ethics and medical terminology for appropriate medical interpretation.

A recent report by the New York Immigration Coalition, which was based on interviews with LEP (*Limited English Proficiency*) patients in Russian, Korean, Spanish and Haitian-Creole at four different New York City hospitals, found that one in four immigrant patients reported not understanding either their medical diagnosis or their treatment as a result of the lack of interpretation and translation services. In the past patients were forced to rely on children, unqualified strangers or mere hand gestures to communicate vital information with their doctors. Misdiagnosis, confusion about a medication regimen and misunderstood consent forms are far too common. All medical facilities are now required to offer at least over the phone or video interpreting in all languages for their patients. On-site medical interpreters are utilized by some hospitals however they provide the best possible scenario for communication between patient and medical staff providing the optimal patient experience.

There are many circumstances in the hospital setting when the presence of an on-site interpreter is vital to hospital staff as well as patients and their families. Whether it is a pre-scheduled psychological evaluation or a crisis in the ER, the presence of a trained and impartial interpreter is a key element in affording LEP patients the best possible care while honoring their privacy and confidentiality.

Below are some common examples of when the presence of an on-site interpreter may be requested.

- Appointments for Hearing Impaired individuals requiring a Sign Language Interpreter
- Psychological Evaluations (durations of 2 –12 hours)
- Same Day Surgeries
- Pre-surgery Consultations

- Maternity Wards
- Diabetes Treatments
- Educational consultations/Lectures Focusing on at-home care for Family Members
- Physical Therapy Sessions
- Cancer Center
- Medical Escort Service
- Interpreting Financial Data

With about 47 million Americans now speaking a language other than English at home, the problems created by language barriers are becoming a higher priority for healthcare providers. Effective communication between medical staff and patients is essential to facilitating access to care, reducing health disparities and medical errors, and assuring a patient's ability to adhere to treatment plans. Language access is one aspect of cultural competence that is essential to quality care for LEP populations.

The Language Center is committed to providing accurate and culturally sensitive on-site medical interpretation for patients and healthcare providers in over 50 languages including Sign Language (ASL). Our interpreters are highly skilled professionals who are capable of dealing with scores of languages and dialects and are accustomed to the "medical" environment, which helps put both the patients and clinicians at ease. The Language Center has an established Code of Ethics and all interpreters have signed confidentiality agreements insuring protection of patients' privacy. In addition, all TLC interpreters undergo a criminal background screen and 10 Panel Drug Screen. All interpreters accepting assignments at a hospital are required to credential with an outside company thereby completing a battery of physical tests and trainings for their own protection and for the patients they interpret for.

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