

Provider Cultural and Linguistic Responsibilities (2024)

Dear Provider:

The following guide summarizes the requirements for providing culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services to your Medi-Cal patients. You may download any of the forms that we reference in this sheet at

<https://www.blueshieldca.com/promise/providers/index.asp?secProviders=cultural-and-linguistics> for printed copies. You may call the Cultural & Linguistic Department at 562-580-6077.

Language Preference

Record each patient's language preference in his or her medical record.

Interpreter Services Poster

Post the "Free Language Assistance Notice" sign at key points of contact. This sign informs patients who are Limited English Proficient (LEP), that free interpreter services are available to them.

Free Interpreter Services

We provide over-the-phone, face-to-face, and American Sign Language interpreter services for patients who are LEP, hard-of-hearing, or deaf. These services are free to you and your patients.

❖ Patients who are LEP

- **Over-the-phone interpreter services:** These services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Please refer to the "Protocol for How to Access Interpreting Services" sheet.
- **Face-to-face interpreter services:** Call our **Customer Care Department**. Requests must be made with advance notice of 5-7 business days.)

❖ Patients who are hard-of-hearing or deaf

- **To communicate over the phone:** You can place calls and receive calls from patients using the California Relay Service (CRS) by dialing 711. The CRS is free and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **American Sign Language onsite interpreter services:** Call our **Customer Care Department**. Requests must be made with advance notice of 5-7 business days.

For **interpreter services after business hours**, call our **Customer Care Department**. Additionally, please ensure the following:

- ❖ Your after-hours Answering Service staff and on-call physician/nurses know how to connect with over-the-phone interpreter services and CRS. Please refer to the "Protocol for How to Access Interpreting Services" sheet.
- ❖ Your answering machine message instructs patients to call their Health Plan to connect with interpreter services.

| Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan Customer Care | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Medi-Cal | 800-605-2556 |
| Medi-Cal SD | 855-699-5557 |

Request or Refusal of Interpreter Services

- ❖ Discourage patients from using friends and family members as interpreters. Do not use minors to interpret unless there is an emergency.
- ❖ If a patient requests or refuses interpreter services after being informed of his right to free interpreter services, file a completed “Request/Refusal Form for Interpretive Services” in his medical chart. These forms are available in a variety of languages, including threshold languages.

Cultural & Language Related Complaints and Grievances

Your patients have a right to file a complaint and grievance if they feel their cultural or language needs are not met in your office. Grievance forms are available in a variety of languages, including county threshold languages.

Referrals to Culturally Appropriate Community Resources & Services

If a patient needs services from a community-based organization or a social service agency, please visit www.HealthyCity.org or use the Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan Community Resource Directory to locate resources. The Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan, Community Resource Directory, is available on the website. Please document the referral in the patient’s record.

Bilingual Providers & Staff

Providers and staff who communicate with patients in a language other than English or who act as interpreters are encouraged to take a language proficiency test by a qualified agency. At a minimum, either of the following should be kept on file bilingual Providers and staff:

- ❖ Completed language capability self-assessment form. Providers and staff may use the ICE “Provider & Staff Language Capability Self-Assessment” form.
 - Those who report limited bilingual capabilities should not act as interpreters or communicate with patients in a language other than English.
 - Do not rely on staff other than qualified bilingual staff to communicate directly in a non-English language with members.
- ❖ Certification of language proficiency or interpretation training (i.e. resume or curriculum vitae, which include number of years worked as interpreter).

Availability of member materials in threshold languages and alternative formats

Patients may request materials in their preferred language and in an alternative format. Alternative formats include Audio CD, Data CD, Braille, and Large Print. For more information, call the Cultural & Linguistic Department.

- ❖ Please distribute the Non-Discrimination Notice (NDN) and Language Assistance Notice (LAN) to your providers.
- ❖ All member mailings must include the NDN and LAN.
https://www.blueshieldca.com/bsca/bsc/wcm/connect/sites/sites_content_en/bsp/about-promise/non-discrimination

Disability and Cultural Competency Training Programs

We encourage you and your staff to attend disability sensitivity and cultural competency (diversity, equity, and inclusion) training programs at least annually. These trainings can help enhance your interpersonal and intra-cultural skills, which can improve communication with your culturally diverse patients, including Seniors and People with Disabilities. Programs are available through Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan, L.A. Care, and other agencies.

Please go to the links below to access disability Training:

https://www.blueshieldca.com/bzca/bsc/public/common/PortalComponents/sites/StreamDocumentServlet?fileName=BSP_2019_MakingDifficultConversationsaboutPalliativeCareEasier.pdf

https://www.blueshieldca.com/bzca/bsc/public/common/PortalComponents/sites/StreamDocumentServlet?fileName=BSP_2019_ADA_OlmsteadTraining.pdf

Please reach out to us if we can help you or your office staff with any Training for Health Education or Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services.

To Your Good Health.

Health Education and Cultural and Linguistic Team,

PROTOCOL FOR HOW TO ACCESS INTERPRETING SERVICES

(Face-to-Face, Over-the-Phone, and American Sign Language)

Why does Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan provide free interpreting services?

Federal law requires that health care providers who see government program recipients provide free language assistance to limited English proficient (LEP) and hard-of-hearing or deaf persons. In order for you to meet this legal requirement, Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan (Blue Shield Promise) is providing Over-the-Phone, Face-to-Face, and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting services at no cost to Blue Shield Promise providers and members.

When is Over-the-Phone Interpreting Services recommended?

- ❖ When you identify a patient as being limited English proficient (LEP) and the patient is already present at the office, telephone interpretation should be used immediately to avoid any delay in service.
- ❖ Telephone interpretation is available 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK.
- ❖ When a LEP patient requests it.

DURING BUSINESS HOURS:

1. **Call the Blue Shield Promise Customer Care Department**

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Medi-Cal (Los Angeles) | 1-800-605-2556 (TTY: 711) |
| Medi-Cal (San Diego) | 1-855-699-5557 (TTY: 711) |
| 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday | |

OR

2. **Call Pacific Interpreters**

| | |
|-------------|----------------|
| Los Angeles | 1-844-765-5899 |
| San Diego | 1-844-765-6012 |

PROTOCOL FOR HOW TO ACCESS INTERPRETING SERVICES

(Face-to-Face, Over-the-Phone, and American Sign Language)

AFTER BUSINESS HOURS:

1. Call Pacific Interpreters

All counties

1-844-765-6011

A Pacific Interpreters Customer Care Agent will ask for the following information:

- Member’s First & Last Name & Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan ID#
 - Language needed
2. **If your office has After Hours Answering Services:** Ensure that their staff can speak languages other than English; please ensure that they know how to connect to an interpreter over the telephone.
 3. **If your office has On-Call Physicians/Nurses:** Ensure that they know how to connect to an interpreter over the telephone.
 4. **If your office has an answering machine:** Let the patients know that they need to call Pacific Interpreters.

When are Face-to-Face and American Sign Language interpreting services recommended?

- ❖ To explain complex medical condition or education (i.e., medical diagnosis, treatment options, insulin instructions, etc.) to a LEP or a hard-of-hearing or deaf member.
- ❖ When a LEP patient requests it.

All requests must be made with an advance notice (3 business days). Please contact the Blue Shield Promise Customer Care Department for further assistance:

Medi-Cal

1-800-605-2556

Please contact the Blue Shield Promise Customer Care Department at least 48 hours in advance if the appointment has been CANCELLED or RESCHEDULED.

PROTOCOL FOR HOW TO ACCESS INTERPRETING SERVICES

(Face-to-Face, Over-the-Phone, and American Sign Language)

[When is California Relay Service \(TTY/Telecommunication Device for Deaf - TDD\) recommended?](#)

- ❖ When your office staff need to communicate with the hard-of-hearing or deaf patients, please call California Relay Service:

English 1-888-877-5379

Spanish 1-888-877-5381

- ❖ When your hard-of-hearing or deaf patients need assistance to call your office or Blue Shield Promise, please dial:

Los Angeles 1-800-735-2929 or 711

San Diego 1-866-461-4288

PLEASE KEEP IN MIND:

1. Always document the member's preferred language in the member's medical record.
2. Always document the request or refusal of interpreting services in the member's medical record.
3. Always post an "Interpreting Services sign" at key medical and non-medical points of contact.
4. Please discourage patients from using friends and family members as interpreters unless the member requests it after being informed about the availability of the free interpreter services.