

NOTE: Due to the State of Minnesota's legislation, coverage for General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) is switching from Health Plan coverage to Fee-For-Service coverage on April 1, 2010.

Chapter 26

Interpreter Services

Overview

This chapter provides information on South Country Health Alliance's (SCHA) coverage for sign and spoken language interpreter services that assist members in obtaining their program's covered health services.

Definitions

- **Interpreter services** - Provide an interpreter to facilitate communication between two or more users of different languages or deaf and or hard of hearing members.
- **Interpreter** - A qualified individual, who has been assessed for professional skills, demonstrates a high level of proficiency in at least two languages and has the appropriate training and experience to interpret with skill and accuracy while adhering to the National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice published by the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care.

Covered Programs

Interpreter services are covered for the following programs when provided outside a residential facility and the per diem in institutional facilities:

- Prepaid Medical Assistance (PMAP)
- MinnesotaCare (MNCare)
- Minnesota Senior Care Plus (MSC+)
- AbilityCare (SNBC)
- SeniorCare Complete (MSHO)

Acceptable Locations

Face to face sign and oral language interpretation services will be reimbursed for covered services in the following settings:

- Medical Clinic
- Outpatient Hospital
- Ambulatory Surgery Center (ASC)
- Emergency Room
- Urgent Care
- Dialysis Facility
- Home Care
- Pharmacy

Interpreter Requirements

- **Criminal Background Check** - The interpreter, the interpreter service agency, or clinics, through which the interpreter is working, is required to perform a criminal background check through the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension with the cost incurred by either the individual or the employer. Additionally, the interpreter or the interpreter's employer must check the interpreter's status using the Office of Inspector General Exclusion listing at <http://exclusions.oig.hhs.gov/search.aspx>. Interpreters must provide results of criminal background checks upon South Country Health Alliance's request.
- **Immunizations and Testing** - The interpreter, the interpreter service agency, or clinics, through which the interpreter is working, must comply with immunization and Tuberculosis testing standards. Health care organizations are required to ensure compliance with national standards with regard to immunizations, verification of immune status, and tuberculosis testing among all health care workers. These standards have been established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The interpreter service agency will provide documentation certifying interpreters have no active tuberculosis infection and are immune to Hepatitis B, Measles (Rubeola), Rubella (German Measles), and Varicella (Chicken Pox) upon South Country Health Alliance's request.
- **Individual credentials** - The following credentials should be recorded and maintained in the Interpreter Service Agency's application, interview notes, and subcontract/employment files:
 - The interpreter is proficient in the patient's native language and in the English language.
 - The interpreter understands and respects the culture of the patient and that of the medical professional.
 - The interpreter shall have a working knowledge of medical terminology and experience in medical interpretation.
 - The interpreter shall provide timely, reliable and competent interpreter services.
 - The interpreter will receive orientation to and follow guidelines based on Ethics for Professional Standards for Interpreters described at the end of this chapter.

Interpreter Services Expectations

The following are requirements and expectations of interpreters and interpreter service agencies:

- The agency must furnish and require the use of identification badges that include a picture ID, name of the agency, and full name of the interpreter identifying them as a medical interpreter. The agency will inform interpreters that they must wear their badge in a visible manner at all times while on health care facility premises and providing interpretation service to South Country Health Alliance members.
- The agency may only employ or directly subcontract with individual interpreters. Participant may not subcontract with any other interpretation agency and may not assign South Country Health Alliance member interpretation services to any agency not directly contracted with South Country Health Alliance.
- The agency will inform interpreters that direct solicitation of interpreter services to South Country Health Alliance members or to any Minnesota Health Care Programs recipient is strictly prohibited. The agency is responsible for enforcing the policy.
- The agency must have provisions or policies to ensure that individual interpreters are billing services under the interpreting agency originally contacted to perform the service.
- The agency will monitor and assess the quality of interpreter performance. The agency agrees that if there are performance issues with specific interpreters, the agency is required to implement a corrective action plan or disciplinary action. In addition, South Country Health Alliance or the clinic reserves the right to deny future assignments to that interpreter. Examples of possible performance issues include, but are not limited to:
 - Late arrival to appointments without a valid reason or notice;
 - Missing an appointment without a valid reason or notice;
 - Lack of English or target language fluency;
 - Leaving the appointment prior to completion of assignment without the agreement or permission of staff;
 - Failure to wear photo ID badge in a visible manner or to provide identification to staff when requested;
 - Soliciting business from clinic clients or staff; or
 - Fraudulent documentation.
- The agency must keep on file the following information:
 - Agency's name and/or logo;
 - Agency's address and phone number;
 - Arrival and departure time;
 - The member's name and address;
 - The member's South Country Health Alliance ID number;
 - The date of service;
 - Appointment time (not applicable to pharmacy claims);
 - Name of clinic or place of service;
 - Address of clinic or place of service;
 - Practitioner's name;
 - Comment or Note section;
 - Interpreter's name, signature, and date; and
 - Clinic staff signature and date.

- Verification of South Country Health Alliance member eligibility must be done by the agency and not the individual interpreters.
- The agency must at all times record and maintain a written record of all interpreter services.
- Records must be kept at least 10 years. The agency must provide the written records to South Country Health Alliance upon request.
- The agency must submit a current list of their interpreters to South Country Health Alliance on a yearly basis at the beginning of each year. The following information must be included: first name, last name, social security number, language, gender, date of hire, date of orientation, date of criminal background check and results, date of interpreter's last ongoing education, and any individual training or certification. Any changes should be sent within 30 days to South Country Health Alliance. (See Attachment A, Interpreter Change Form).
- The agency must provide, upon request, a service report to South Country Health Alliance. (See Attachment B, Service Report Form).
- The use of the South Country Health Alliance name or logo in any marketing efforts by the agency is strictly prohibited without prior approval from South Country Health Alliance.
- Gender appropriate interpreters must be provided if requested by the patient or clinic.
- South Country Health Alliance will conduct annual site visits to ensure all requirements and expectations are being met.
- The agency or individual interpreter is required to perform a clinic appointment reminder call to each client within 24 hours prior to the appointment.
- The interpreter is required to arrive 10 minutes early for an appointment.
- The interpreter is required to remain at the clinic 30 minutes past their arrival time to ensure their availability if the patient or physician arrives late. The interpreter may leave prior to the 30 minutes wait time if the clinic determines and documents that the appointment has been cancelled and the patient has been contacted and notified.
- The agency must respond to requests with one or more days notice as well as to urgent (same day) requests.
- The agency must provide the following:
 - **Same day requests:** Call the requesting clinic as soon as appointment is filled with an accurate estimated time of arrival for interpreter (keeping in mind traffic and parking delays).
 - **Future requests (next day and beyond):** Provide verbal confirmation to requesting clinic by 4:00 PM on the day the request is made.
- The agency must respond to requests during daytime operations (6 AM to 6 PM on weekdays) as well as after hours (6 PM to 6 AM evenings, weekends and holidays).
- The agency must respond to emergency situations. An unplanned event requiring an immediate response is considered an emergency. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Member's arrival in the Emergency Room;
 - Mental health situations, or

- Member's health could be compromised if not seen immediately.
- The agency must respond to emergency requests within 15 minutes. A return phone call from the agency will let the requester know whether or not you can fill the request and provide an accurate estimated time of arrival.
- If the agency is unable to fulfill a particular request for interpreter services or needs to cancel an arranged interpreter and cannot find a replacement, the agency must notify South Country Health Alliance Member Services immediately.
- The agency will inform interpreters of the requirement that, except on rare occasions which will be clearly communicated, they must be available for a minimum of 60 minutes and that they must inform provider/staff a minimum of 15 minutes before they must leave, to give staff the opportunity to notify the agency of the need for a replacement interpreter. If there is a need for a replacement, the agency must assist the clinic with their request.
- Interpreters will arrive for appointments with the following information:
 - Client name;
 - Location;
 - Date;
 - Time;
 - Estimated duration of visit; and
 - Language required.
- If an interpreter request cannot be filled for a future scheduled appointment, a minimum of 48 hours advance notice will be given to the requesting party.

Professional Standards for Interpreters

Quality interpreting requires that the interpreter understands a set of core competencies, and adheres to a code of ethics.

- **Introduces self and explains role** - The interpreter consults first with the provider to learn the goals of the medical encounter, and with the patient to assess language requirements. Then, if this is their first meeting, the interpreter explains their role to both the patient and the provider. The interpreter must emphasize the professional obligation to transmit everything that is said in the encounter to the other party and to maintain confidentiality.
- **Positions self to facilitate communication** - The interpreter should be seen and heard by both parties, but should position themselves in the place that is least disruptive to direct communication between provider and patient, and most respectful of the patient's physical privacy.
- **Accurately and completely relays the message between patient and provider** - The interpreter converts oral messages expressed in one language into their equivalent in the other, so that the interpreted message can elicit the same response as the original. The interpreter does not alter or edit statements from either party, or comment on their content.

- **Uses the interpretation mode that best enhances comprehension** - The interpreter encourages direct communication between patient and provider, using whatever modes are appropriate. Usually, the best mode will be to use “I...” in reference to the speaker, rather than “he said that...” or “she said that...” and to interpret for the patient and the provider alternately (known as consecutive interpreting.)
- **Reflects the style and vocabulary of the speaker** - The interpreter attempts to preserve the register (special vocabulary and level of formality) as well as the emphasis and degree of emotion expressed by the speaker.
- **Ensures that the interpreter understands the message to be transmitted** - The interpreter asks for clarification or repetition if the message from either party is unclear.
- **Remains neutral** - In situations where there is conflict between patient and provider, the interpreter continues interpreting completely, lets the parties speak for themselves, and does not take sides.
- **Identifies and separates personal beliefs from those of the other parties** - The interpreter does not project their own values into the discussion.
- **Identifies and corrects own mistakes** - The interpreter checks the accuracy of their own interpretation.
- **Addresses culturally based miscommunication, when necessary** - The interpreter identifies instances in which cultural differences between provider and patient have the potential to seriously impair their communication. In those instances, the interpreter shares cultural information with both parties that may be relevant, or assists the speaker in developing an explanation that can be understood by the listener.

South County Health Alliance Contracted Interpreter Service Agencies

AGENCY	LANGUAGES
Affiliated Language Services, Inc. 2700 E. 28th Street, Suite 110 Minneapolis, MN 55406 612-225-6757	Amharic, Arabic, Hmong, Oromo, Somali, Spanish
Affiliated Language Services, Inc. 1500 First Avenue N.E., Suite 111F Rochester, MN 55906 507-271-9103	Amharic, Arabic, Hmong, Oromo, Somali, Spanish
Dialog One PO Box 443 St. Paul, MN 55104 651-379-8600	Over 150 Languages available

<p>EA Bilingual Services 1885 University Avenue W., Suite 95 St. Paul, MN 55104 651-644-0601</p>	<p>Afar, Amharic, Arabic, Berber, Burmese, Bosnian, Cambodian, Cantonese, Creole, Croatian, Eritrean, Farsi, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Hmong, Italian, Karen, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Nuer, Oromo, Persian, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Thai, Tigrinya, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yoruba and more.</p>
<p>Face 2 Face Interpreting, Inc. 1421 Park Avenue S., Suite 203 Minneapolis, MN 55404 612-871-3223</p>	<p>Amharic, Afar, Albanian, Afghan, Barga, Berber, Byelorussian, Dutch, Farsi, French, Kpella, Sarpo, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Vietnamese, Hmong, Italian, Ormo, Tagalog, Anuak, Dinka, Hausa, Ibo/Igbo, Karen, Kisi, Lorma, Tibetan, Yoruba, Russian, Portuguese, Chinese, Estonian, Nuer</p>
<p>International Quality Interpreting Services, LLC 3261 19th Street N.W. Rochester, MN 55901 507-252-8117</p>	<p>Arabic, Cambodian, Somali, Spanish</p>
<p>Kim Tong Translation Service, Inc. 3252 32nd Avenue S. Minneapolis, MN 55406 612-724-5962</p>	<p>Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Belarusian, Berber, Burmese, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cantonese, Creole, Croatian, Danish, Dari, Eritrean, Farsi, Filipino, French, German, Gujarait, Harar, Hebrew, Hindi, Hmong, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Karen, Korean, Krahn, Kurdish, Laotian, Lithuanian, Luplith, Mandarin, Nepolese, Norwegian, Nuer, Oromo, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tactile Sign Language, Taishanese, Thai, Tibetan, Tigrinya, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian, Urdu, Uzbek, Vietnamese, Yiddish</p>
<p>Midwest Language Banc 1609 Chicago Avenue S. Minneapolis, MN 55404 612-695-6008</p>	<p>Akkan, Albanian, Amharic, Anuak, Arabic, Armenian, Bashto, Bassah, Belorussian, Bengali, Bhutan, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cantonese, Cebuano, Comoren, Creole, Creole French, Dari, Dinka (Sudanese), Dutch, Ethiopian, Farsi, Filipino, French, Fulani, German, Gio, Gola, Greek, Greybo, Gujarati, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Hmong,</p>

	<p>Indonesian, Irani, Italian, Japanese, Katchi, Khmer, Kissil, Kiswahili, Korean, Kosovo, Kpelleh, Krahn, Krio, Kru (Liberian), Kurdish, Laotion, Lorma, Mandarin, Mandingo, Mano, Nepali, Neur, Oromo, Pashto, Persian, Polish, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Taiwanese, Tamil, Telegis, Telegu, Thai, Thirumalai, Tibetan, Tigrinya, Tomi, Turksih, Ukranian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Wolaff, Yourba</p>
<p>Midwest Language Banc - St. Cloud 2719 W. Division Street, Suite 109 St. Cloud, MN 56301 612-695-6008</p>	<p>Akkan, Albanian, Amharic, Anuak, Arabic, Armenian, Bashto, Bassah, Belorussian, Bengali, Bhutan, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cantonese, Cebuano, Comoren, Creole, Creole French, Dari, Dinka (Sudanese), Dutch, Ethiopian, Farsi, Filipino, French, Fulani, German, Gio, Gola, Greek, Greybo, Gujarati, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Hmong, Indonesian, Irani, Italian, Japanese, Katchi, Khmer, Kissil, Kiswahili, Korean, Kosovo, Kpelleh, Krahn, Krio, Kru (Liberian), Kurdish, Laotion, Lorma, Mandarin, Mandingo, Mano, Nepali, Neur, Oromo, Pashto, Persian, Polish, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Taiwanese, Tamil, Telegis, Telegu, Thai, Thirumalai, Tibetan, Tigrinya, Tomi, Turksih, Ukranian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Wolaff, Yourba</p>
<p>Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living, Inc. 2720 N. Broadway Rochester, MN 55906 507-285-1815</p>	<p>Cambodian, Somali, Spanish</p>
<p>The Bridge World Language Center, Inc. 110 Second Street S., Suite 213 Waite Park, MN 56387 320-259-9239</p>	<p>Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Laotian, Korean, Vietnamese, Oromo, Amharic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Cambodian, Arabic, Anuak, Belarusian, Bengali, Bosnian, Chinese, Creole, Croatian, Farsi, French, Ewe, Ga, Georgian, German, Gujirati, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Javanese, Kissi,</p>

	Korean, Krahn, Kurdish, Lorma, Mandingo, Malayalam, Nepolese, Nuer, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Sapo/Sapro, Serbian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Twi, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yoruba
United Language - Faribault 302 N. Central Avenue, Suite 10 Faribault, MN 55021 612-605-4554	Amharic, Cambodian, Farsi, French, Hmong, Nuer, Oromo, Pashto (Central), Persian, Russian, Somali, Vietnamese
United Language - Minneapolis 1433 W. Franklin Avenue, Suite 7A Minneapolis, MN 55404 612-605-4554	Amharic, Cambodian, Farsi, French, Hmong, Nuer, Oromo, Pashto (Central), Persian, Russian, Somali, Vietnamese
United Language - Rochester 1312 1/2 Seventh Street N.W., Suite 206 Rochester, MN 55901 507-491-0502	Amharic, Cambodian, Farsi, French, Hmong, Nuer, Oromo, Pashto (Central), Persian, Russian, Somali, Vietnamese
United Language - St. Cloud 14 N. Third Avenue, Suite 118 St. Cloud, MN 56303 612-250-3899	Amharic, Cambodian, Farsi, French, Hmong, Nuer, Oromo, Pashto (Central), Persian, Russian, Somali, Vietnamese
United Language - Willmar 408 Litchfield Avenue S.W., Suite 4 Willmar, MN 56201 320-231-3333	Amharic, Cambodian, Farsi, French, Hmong, Nuer, Oromo, Pashto (Central), Persian, Russian, Somali, Vietnamese

Tips for working with interpreters

To maximize the effectiveness when working with an interpreter, here are some tips you can use:

- **Meet with the interpreter beforehand** – Clarify unique vocabulary, technical terms, acronyms, jargon, seating arrangements, lighting and other needs. Provide interpreter with any written material ahead of time.
- **Reserve seats for the deaf or hard of hearing participants** – Provide a clear view of the speaker and interpreter. Deaf or hard of hearing participants may still choose to sit elsewhere.
- **Interpreter should be in the member's sight line** – This allows deaf or hard of hearing participants to pick up visual cues and the expressions of the speaker.

In small groups discussions, consider using a circle or semi-circle seating arrangement instead of a theater style arrangement.

- **Be aware of lighting** – Provide good lighting so the interpreter can be seen. If lights will be turned off or dimmed, be sure the interpreter can still be seen clearly (use spotlight or small lamp to direct light toward the interpreter).
- **Talk directly to the deaf or hard of hearing person** – Maintain eye contact with the deaf or hard of hearing person. Avoid directing comments to the interpreter (i.e. “Tell him...” or “Ask her...”), respond directly to the deaf or hard of hearing person.
- **Speak naturally** – Speak at your normal pace. Interpreters will ask you to slow down or repeat if necessary. Interpreters listen for concepts and ideas, not just words, to render an accurate interpretation.
- **Avoid private conversations - everything will be interpreted** – Whatever the interpreter hears will be interpreted. Do not ask the interpreter to censor any portion of the conversation. Ask the deaf or hard of hearing person directly if they are following the conversation.
- **One person should speak at a time** – An interpreter can only accommodate one speaker at a time. Encourage the group to follow this rule. If you are facilitating a group discussion, be aware that the interpreter will be several seconds behind. Pause before recognizing the next speaker to allow the interpreter to finish with the current speaker.
- **Avoid asking the interpreter for opinions or comments regarding the content of the meeting** – Interpreters follow a code of ethics which requires impartiality and confidentiality with all assignment related information. Do not assume the interpreter has prior knowledge of the deaf person or will be interpreting future appointments.
- **Provide a short break every hour** – Interpreting is mentally and physically taxing. Do not expect the interpreter to interpret during these breaks.

Reimbursement and Billing Information

- Bill all interpreter claims in the electronic 837P format.
- Face to face oral and sign language services will be reimbursed only for covered services under the member’s benefit and/or coverage. One (1) unit equals 15 minutes.
- For services provided on the same day, a time span of 1 hour and 30 minutes must separate services provided for the same member by the same interpreter at

the same clinic to be paid at another one hour minimum fee.

- A patient or physician “no show” fee will be paid at a 30 minute (2 units) maximum rate. The interpreter must remain at the clinic 30 minutes past the appointment time to ensure availability in the event that the patient or physician arrives late.
- Medical telephone conference interpretation services that involve a medical professional will be reimbursed at a flat rate.
- Interpreter services provided at pharmacies will be reimbursed per unit with a maximum of 30 minutes (2 units).
- Interpretation services for dialysis treatment will be reimbursed as follows:
 - The member’s first treatment will be reimbursed at the 1 hour unit rate not to exceed a total of 3 hours (12 units).
 - Time beyond the 1 hour minimum (4 units) will be reimbursed at the quarter hour unit rate not to exceed 3 hours (12 units).
 - Subsequent treatments must use medical telephone conference interpretation at a flat rate.

Service Description	Service Code	Minimum Charged
Face to face interpreter (F-F)	T1013	4 Units
F-F: no show	T1013	2 Units
F-F: 2 nd appt.	T1013 mod. 76	4+ Units, same pat.
Telephone Int.	99199 mod. telephone	Flat rate per call
Mileage	SO215	Per case – does not require pre approval

Code of Ethics for Interpreters in Health Care

- The interpreter treats as confidential, within the treating team, all information learned in the performance of their professional duties, while observing relevant requirements regarding disclosure.
- The interpreter strives to render the message accurately, conveying the content and spirit of the original message, taking into consideration its cultural context.
- The interpreter strives to maintain impartiality and refrains from counseling,

advising or projecting personal biases or beliefs.

- The interpreter maintains the boundaries of the professional role, refraining from personal involvement.
- The interpreter continuously strives to develop awareness of his/her own and other (including biomedical) cultures encountered in the performance of their professional duties.
- The interpreter treats all parties with respect.
- When the patient's health, well-being, or dignity is at risk, the interpreter may be justified in acting as an advocate. Advocacy is understood as an action taken on behalf of an individual that goes beyond facilitating communication, with the intention of supporting good health outcomes. Advocacy must only be undertaken after careful and thoughtful analysis of the situation and if other less intrusive actions have not resolved the problem.
- The interpreter strives to continually further his/her knowledge and skills.
- The interpreter must at all times act in a professional and ethical manner.

A National Code of Ethics for Interpreters in Health Care • July 2004



ATTACHMENT A
Interpreter Change Form

Agency Information

Agency Name_____

Tax ID#_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip Code_____

Phone Number_____ Fax Number_____

Individual Interpreter Information

First Name_____ Last Name_____

Circle one: Male or Female Birth date_____ Social Security #_____

Language(s)_____

Date of Hire (if new interpreter)_____

Date of Termination (if no longer with agency)_____

Authorized Agency Signature_____

Title_____ Date_____

Email address_____

