

Provider cultural awareness and linguistic responsibilities

The following guide summarizes federal and state requirements for providing culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services to your Medi-Cal patients. Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan is committed to supporting you in these efforts. If you need clarification on any of the requirements, please call our Cultural & Linguistic Department at **(562) 580-6077** or email BlueShieldofCAHealthEducation@blueshieldca.com.

As needed to support a patient, contact Member Customer Service:

- Medi-Cal: (800) 605-2556
- Medi-Cal San Diego: (855) 699-5557

Language preference

Record each patient's language preference in their 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.

- **For 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](#)" fact sheet.
 - Face-to-face interpreter services: Call our Member Customer Service Department. Requests must be made with advance notice of 5-7 business days.
 - If an in-person interpreter is unavailable, please utilize over-the-phone interpreter services to meet the members language access needs. Refer to the "Protocol for How to Access Interpreting Services" fact sheet.
- **For 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 Member Customer Service Department. Requests must be made with advance notice of 5-7 business days.
 - If an in-person interpreter is unavailable, please utilize video remote interpreting services to meet the members language access needs. Refer to the “Protocol for How to Access Interpreting Services” sheet.

For interpreter services after business hours, call our Member Customer Service 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” fact sheet.
- Your answering machine message instructs patients to call their health plan to connect with interpreter services.

Request or refusal of interpreter services

- Please 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 their right to free interpreter services, file a completed “Request/Refusal Form for Interpretive Services” in their medical chart. These forms are available in all threshold languages.

Cultural and 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 all county threshold languages.

Referrals to culturally appropriate community resources and services

If a patient needs services from a community-based organization or a social service agency, please refer your patient to blueshieldpromise.findhelp.com to locate resources or you can also refer your patient to the Cultural & Linguistics team (562) 580-6077. Please document the referral in the patient’s record.

Bilingual providers and 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 for bilingual providers and staff:

- Completed language capability self-assessment form. Providers and staff may use the Health Industry Collaboration Effort (HICE) “[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., a resume or curriculum vitae, which includes the number of years worked as an 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 the Notice of Availability of Language Services and Auxiliary Aids and Services to your providers. [View non-discrimination and language assistance notices](#)
- All member mailings must include both of these notices.

Health equity and cultural competency training programs

Providers and their staff are required to attend a Health Equity training, which includes disability sensitivity, cultural competency (diversity, equity, and inclusion), and gender affirming care 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 Promise, L.A. Care, and other agencies.

- [ADA and Olmstead Training](#)
- [Making Difficult Conversations about Palliative Care Easier](#)
- [Improving the Healthcare Experience for the Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Intersex Community](#)

If additional training or resources are needed, please reach out to our Health Education and Cultural & Linguistics team at BlueShieldofCAHealthEducation@blueshieldca.com.