



THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT

How to Choose and Use a Language Agency

A Guide for Health and Social Service Providers
Who Wish to Contract With Language Agencies

by
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for
The California Endowment



Dear Colleague:

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As you may know, The California Endowment's mission is to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. To help support this mission, we have developed a Language Access initiative, and as part of our technical assistance in this effort, we have commissioned "How to Choose and Use a Language Agency" so that we and others may learn more about selecting and using health care interpreter service agencies.

Each of the one in five Californians with Limited English Proficiency are among the most vulnerable of our state's residents. Without the ability to communicate with their providers, these health consumers are at risk for decreased access, delayed care and poorer health outcomes. Without the ability to communicate with their patients, providers are at risk of misdiagnosis, decreased satisfaction and increased medical errors among their Limited English Proficient patients. We have supported multiple strategies for bridging this gap: encouraging the use of bilingual providers, increasing the numbers and quality of trained interpreters, exploring the optimal use of technology and technical assistance, among others.

We hope that this publication will assist clinics, hospitals, health plans and social service agencies in their efforts to better serve their Limited English Proficient clients, and we have included a compendium of a few interpreter services agencies from each region in California just to get you started.

We hope you find this publication of value, and we thank you, as always, for being an important partner for healthier communities.

Sincerely,

Robert K. Ross, M.D.
President and Chief Executive Officer
The California Endowment

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Introduction

It happens every day. A patient comes in for an appointment; the doctor speaks English, the patient speaks Spanish. The social worker meets with a client about a problem with food stamps; he speaks English and Spanish, the client speaks Hmong. The school nurse calls home about a child with a fever. She speaks English; mom speaks Farsi, Armenian, Somali, or one of a hundred different languages. How is the service provider to do his or her job well in the face of these language differences?

There is a growing awareness in California, and across the United States, of the importance of quality language services to support communication between service providers and Limited English Proficient (LEP) patients and clients. Federal Civil Rights guidelines and accreditation standards are becoming clearer about these requirements.¹ A growing body of research is showing that the use of family, friends and untrained bilingual staff to interpret leads to poor communication,² and other research is showing that unclear communication leads to poor outcomes and higher service costs.³ Serving a multilingual community is becoming the norm for most health and human service organizations, leaving administrators searching for the resources that will help them close this language gap most efficiently.

There is no one formula for providing language access services. Hospitals, clinics and social service agencies are hiring staff interpreters, training bilingual staff to interpret and recruiting bilingual providers.⁴ Many are turning to a unique resource and a growing industry that can play a vital role in assuring language access for LEP patients and clients: the language agency.

Language agencies are organizations that provide interpretation and/or translation services to another organization, usually in return for a fee. They are also called interpreting agencies or translation agencies. They may differ in a number of ways. Some only provide interpreter services; others provide a variety of services. Some provide in-person interpretation only, some telephonic interpretation only, others provide both. Many are small, privately owned, for-profit companies, often started by entrepreneurs who were (or still are) interpreters themselves. Some are divisions within nonprofit community service agencies set up to coordinate support for immigrants and refugees. Others, especially telephonic interpreter agencies, may be large national corporations. Some specialize in particular venues, such as the legal or health care arenas, while others serve a variety of industries. None of these profiles are intrinsically better than the others; the key is to have a clear idea of what you want from the agency and to choose one that meets those requirements.

How best to use a language agency? What can you expect from such a service? And, how do you choose a good one? This publication is designed to assist health and human services administrators who are interested in contracting with a language agency and who are asking themselves these questions. It deals principally with agencies providing interpreter services, as opposed to translation services⁵, and spoken language as opposed to sign language. Much of the information included here, however, will also apply to translation agencies and to agencies specializing in interpretation for the deaf and hard of hearing. The purpose of this publication is to help you consider how a language agency might fit into your language access program, to suggest what you might look for when you are choosing an agency, and to help you avoid unrealistic expectations of an agency. In addition, a compendium of a few language agencies from each region of California is included to give you a sampling of existing resources. Language agencies can be a valuable partner in serving your LEP clients and patients; hopefully this guide will help you to find a good one and to work with it efficiently.

How Can a Language Agency Help Me?

How can a language agency best serve your organization? The answer will depend on the level of demand, your internal resources, the language mix of your patient population, and the capacity of the agencies at your disposal. Most health care and social service institutions use a combination of resources to meet language access needs. Language agencies can be integrated into your language access service in a variety of ways, depending on the needs of your institution.

Auxiliary support for overextended staff and/or contract interpreters

Institutions with in-house staff interpreters, contract interpreters, and trained bilingual staff who interpret, will often call an agency as an auxiliary resource when other (usually less costly) resources are not available. Even if you have three full-time Spanish interpreters on staff, you will need some additional help when seven Spanish-speaking patients all book appointments for 10 a.m. on Tuesday. Or you may have interpreters available only between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m. and need some help covering the occasional emergency at night. The right agency can fill this need on an ad-hoc basis without your incurring the cost of hiring more staff.

Primary source of interpreters of languages of low demand

Some organizations use agencies primarily to provide interpreters for those languages that they only need occasionally. Even with a full complement of staff interpreters, contracted interpreters and bilingual providers, you may not have anyone who speaks Ibo, Chamorro or Kurdish. Languages such as Khmer, Korean, or Cantonese may be more commonly spoken among your patient population, but you still may not have a large enough demand to warrant contracting or hiring a staff person. Agencies are more likely to have interpreters of languages of limited diffusion. Also, because agencies generally serve many institutions, they may be able to keep such interpreters busy enough that they seek training and gain sufficient experience to become skilled interpreters.

Substitute for an internal interpreter service

Some institutions find it simpler to outsource all of their language assistance needs; they use the agency as a substitute for an internal interpreter department. In these cases, anyone in the institution who needs an interpreter simply calls the agency directly. This obviates the need for an interpreter service department or complicated decision trees of whom staff should call with language needs.

What Can I Expect From a Language Agency?

Credibility

Just as in any business relationship, you should be able to trust an agency's integrity. This is a fast-growing industry in some parts of the state and the nation, and there is little oversight. Because of fierce competition, high expectations by users and a lack of national standards in the field, it seems that some agencies stretch the truth a little – or a lot – in representing their services. When you approach an agency (or one approaches you) about providing services to you, don't be afraid to ask questions **and require verification of the answers**. Agencies that are serious about providing a quality service will be willing to share this information.

Quality interpreting

The most important expectation you should have of a language agency is quality interpreting. After all, this is the product it is selling. Interpreters should be carefully screened and should have professional training. An agency should be willing to guarantee the quality of the language services being sold.

When the agency cannot provide an interpreter whose skills it can stand behind, it should advise you before accepting the assignment and tell you the qualifications of the person it can provide. Especially with languages of limited diffusion, it may be that an untrained bilingual is the best you can hope for, but you should know that before the interpreter arrives.

High quality customer service

A language agency, like any business, should be able to provide good customer service to you, the client. Some aspects of good customer service include:

- *Polite and efficient call center staff*

When you call the agency, whoever answers the phone should be courteous, efficient and knowledgeable.

- *Ability to meet your demand for interpreters*

The agency should be able to fill most of the appointments you assign, except in languages that it told you at the time of contract that it could not provide. A response rate over 85 percent is acceptable for some, but many agencies have internal benchmarks of 95 percent or higher. Telephonic availability rates will likely be higher than in-person rates, and the rates for "hard to find" languages will likely be lower. Remember that no agency will be able to fill your requests 100 percent of the time.

- *Low cancellation rates*

If an agency commits to sending an interpreter, you should be able to expect that it will send one. Calling you back to say that an interpreter could not be provided for an appointment that was already accepted should be a very rare occurrence.

- *Low no-show or late arrival rates*

When the agency commits to sending an interpreter, the interpreter should actually arrive — and arrive on time. Again, there will always be occasional no-shows or late arrivals, but this should be the exception.

- *Acceptable emergency response time*
If you call an agency for a walk-in patient, the agency should be able to get you an interpreter within an hour (depending on the location of the appointment and the interpreter and the language). Many agencies, even those that do not routinely offer telephonic interpreting, will offer an interpreter over the phone in emergency situations that require an interpreter immediately.
- *Implementation*
If you request it, an agency should be willing to train your staff on how to use the agency's services, and perhaps even on how to use an interpreter if the agency is the sole provider of language services in the system.
- *Rational scheduling of interpreters*
It is reasonable to expect that the agency will not overbook its in-person interpreters so that the interpreter must leave in the middle of an appointment. If the appointment runs over because the clinic is running behind, or if more services are required than were originally requested, the interpreter and the agency should not be penalized if the interpreter has to leave. If this becomes a pattern, it would be wise to negotiate a solution with the agency.
- *Rapid connect rates*
For telephone interpreter services, the agency should be able to provide an average connect rate of under a minute, measured from when the phone starts to ring at the agency to when an interpreter is on the line. Some agencies' average connect rates are under 30 seconds.
- *Effective complaint resolution*
Preferably, there should be someone assigned to your account (an account manager) or someone assigned to resolve problems who will respond to your concerns promptly. It is reasonable to expect at least a return call within 24 hours, even if resolving the problem takes longer. Agreements should then be fulfilled and promised services delivered. In addition, the agency should have a method of tracking and documenting concerns so that patterns can be identified.

Good business practices

Language agencies should be treated like any other contracted service:

- *Contract*
There should be a clear contract in place that assigns liability and specifies responsibilities, pay rates and the manner of resolving difficulties. A contract should be signed regardless of how small a client you may be.
- *Computerized billing*
The agency should have a system for providing accurate, timely billing. Computerized billing is a virtual necessity, with tracking based on signed encounter forms if the service is done in-person.

- *Data collection*
The agency should have the capacity to collect and report on basic data such as appointment date, language, encounter, name of the interpreter, and start and end times.
- *Financial stability*
The agency should be financially stable. Agencies which function with limited cash flow will not be likely to provide you with consistently high-quality services. Agencies can reasonably be expected to wait 30 days for payment, but if your institution routinely takes 60 or 90 days to pay contractors, you should make sure the agency is able to wait that long for payment and still remain solvent.
- *Solicitations*
The agency or its interpreters should not solicit your providers directly but should deal with administration.

Extra services

Some agencies may be able to provide additional services such as customized billing, participation in pilot projects, special tracking, provider training, telephonic aid in identifying patient languages, language identification cards, patient reminder calls, account managers, special pricing programs, implementation support and consulting services around language access services.

What's not reasonable?

As mentioned above, some expectations of agencies are not reasonable. NO agency can be expected to:

- Fill all your requests all the time.
- Guarantee a 0 percent no-show rate.
- Have access to interpreters in every language in the world.
- Provide highly trained interpreters in languages of very low demand.
- Guarantee in-person interpreters available in under an hour.
- Provide weekly billing.
- Allow you to require its interpreters to do written translations while on an interpreting assignment.
- Provide patient transportation.
- Allow its interpreters to participate in medical interviewing or securing information from patients without providers present.
- Publish a list of its interpreters.
- Give out telephone numbers of interpreters.
- Allow you to work interpreters over three hours without a break.
- Provide highly complex data analysis at no extra cost, beyond normal billing/reporting.
- Implement different policies and procedures for each customer.
- Allow you to contract directly with an interpreter who has come to your institution through the agency.

- Write off charges incurred because of errors on the part of the health institution staff.

Most important in deciding what is reasonable and unreasonable to expect from an agency is to have clear understandings at the beginning of the partnership and to maintain regular open lines of communication so that difficulties can be addressed and resolved.

How Do I Choose the Best Language Agency to Serve my Institution?

When you contact a prospective language agency, you will want to inquire about a wide range of issues in order to gauge the likely quality of the services.

Quality of interpreting

- *How does the agency recruit interpreters/translators?*

The most successful agencies recruit interpreters on an ongoing basis from a wide range of sources. They will maintain close on-going relationships with the immigrant and refugee communities from which interpreters may come, as well as with professional interpreter organizations and training programs. Agencies which are vague about how they recruit may have difficulty filling your needs long term.

- *How does the agency screen interpreter candidates?*

Different agencies will have different minimum requirements for interpreters. While there is some debate whether it is necessary (or even possible) to require that all interpreters have a college degree, all interpreters should certainly be screened for their language skills in both active languages. Screening techniques range from an informal conversation to standardized testing, so ask specifically about how screening is done. As is often the case, standards for common language interpreters (like Spanish) are likely to be higher than standards for interpreters of “hard-to-find” languages.

- *Does the agency require interpreters to have received professional training in interpreting?*

As few health and human service interpreters come with degrees in interpretation, it is very important that interpreters receive some form of professional training as interpreters. Does the agency require training? If so, how many hours? Trainings can run from four hours to over 200. Obviously, the longer the training, the better, but 40 hours is a common length for basic training programs. What does the training cover? Ask to see the curriculum. The course should, at a minimum, cover the interpreter role, ethics, modes, basic conversation skills, handling the flow of the session, intervening and medical terminology. The more participatory the course, the more skill building and practice included, the more effective the course will be. Ask also about the credentials of the trainer. The impact of a course often depends on who is teaching.⁶

- *Does the agency require any continuing education of its contractors? If so, how much and what sort of proof do the contract interpreters have to offer?*

Continuing education is important and reasonable to expect of interpreters who provide services regularly. The California Healthcare Interpreter Association (CHIA) has chapters in the Bay Area, the Los Angeles area, the Central Valley and the Sacramento area that may provide continuing education for health care interpreters.

- *What percentage of the agency's interpreters is certified?*⁷

It is useful to know how many certified interpreters the agency has in each language; however, true certification programs are rare. At the time of this writing, there is no publicly available certification process for health care interpreters in California. However, there are several other forms of interpreter certification of which you should be aware.

The Federal Court system certifies interpreters in Spanish, Haitian Creole and Navajo. The California Personnel Board also certifies court interpreters in Spanish, Arabic, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Tagalog and Vietnamese. There is a “Medical Interpreter” certification for legal interpreters providing services for Workers Compensation exams, but this test is not designed to certify clinical interpreters and is offered only in Spanish.

Language Line Services (LLS), a for-profit telephonic interpreting agency, has developed a valid internal certification process, which at this time is available only to LLS interpreters.

American Sign Language interpreters may be certified by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) or the Registry for Interpreters of the Deaf (RID), with a variety of special certificates for particular venues. The two organizations have also formed a joint task force, the National Council on Interpreting which is developing a new, joint certification process.

The American Translators Association (ATA) accredits translators into English from Arabic, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish; and from English into Chinese, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

The Department of Social and Health Services of the State of Washington also has a certification program for health care interpreters who speak Spanish, Russian, Korean, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Cambodian, Lao and Vietnamese. The state also offers a “qualification” test to interpreters of other languages. Especially with telephonic providers, you may find interpreters in their pools who are certified through this process.

If an agency tells you that all its interpreters are certified, ask who has certified them. If the certification is internal to the agency, ask to see the reliability and validity data to make sure that it is truly a certification test and not simply an assessment. Obviously, you would like to see more certified interpreters than not in an agency’s interpreter pool. However, if it appears that few of the agency’s interpreters are certified, take a careful look before assuming that interpreter quality will be poor. It may be that the agency provides services largely in uncertifiable languages, or that training is being used in lieu of certification to guarantee quality.

- *What Code of Ethics are the interpreters/translators asked to follow?*

At present, there is no one code of ethics for health care interpreters that is nationally accepted, although California Healthcare Interpreters Association (CHIA) has recently published a draft code of ethics⁸ and the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care is currently working to build national consensus around a single code of ethics. As a result, at this time each agency may have its own code. Ask to see it, and ask how interpreters/translators are instructed about it. If the code is simply mailed to interpreters, it will be doubtful that they will really understand it.

- *What protocols are interpreters expected to use?*

Are the interpreters expected to use first person interpreting, that is to say “I have a stomach ache” instead of “The patient says she has a stomach ache”? Are they expected to do a pre-session with the patient and provider to clarify their role and how they will interpret? Do they provide culture-related information if communication has broken down due to cultural reasons? Will they advocate if necessary? How are in-person interpreters told to dress and present themselves? How are the interpreters instructed to handle difficult situations? Many agencies will have an orientation apart from formal training to teach interpreters the accepted protocols of that particular agency. Ask to see any instructional materials that are given out and make sure the protocols are in keeping with professional practice and your internal guidelines.

- *How does the agency provide long-term quality assurance for interpretation?*

After the interpreters start to provide services, is there any mechanism in place to see how they are doing? Are interpreters periodically monitored in any way? Or will the agency rely on complaints from you as a quality assurance technique?

- *What mechanisms does the agency have to instruct interpreters about specific policies and procedures of your institution?*

How does the agency communicate with its interpreters? Is there a newsletter, monthly meetings, a Listserv? As you work together, it will certainly be necessary for the agency to communicate details to interpreters about working at your institution, whether there has been a change in parking designations or there are new instructions on getting encounter forms signed. Make sure the agency has some structured way of contacting its interpreter pool.

- *Does the agency specialize in any particular industry(ies)?*

Some agencies serve all venues: legal, medical, insurance, social service, financial, customer service, educational, etc. Others will specialize in only one or two industries. While a more focused agency will not necessarily give better service, it is easier for interpreters to interpret effectively in fewer venues, simply because this requires a smaller range of specialized vocabulary and protocols. Some large agencies may have different cadres of interpreters to serve different venues, or may provide assistance with vocabulary development to interpreters who serve multiple venues. If the agency serves a wide range of venues, you might want to ask specifically how the agency guarantees quality across so many different situations.

Interpreter service

- *Available languages*

You will want to ask the agency about the depth and breadth of its interpreter pool. How many interpreters does it have actively available on a daily basis? How many in each language? How many are really qualified? Some agencies seem to have an awfully long list of “available languages,” making one wonder if those interpreters would really be available if and when you needed them.

To evaluate what you learn about the agency's capacity, you will need to know your organization's language needs, both by language and by demand. What are your top five languages? Which language requests have you found especially difficult to fill? Some agencies specialize in certain language groups: Spanish only, Asian languages only, "hard to find" languages only, ASL only. Instead of expecting one agency to cover all your language needs, it may be better to have multiple contracts with various agencies, and use each for the service in which it specializes.

- *Back-up alliances*

Some agencies have agreements with other agencies to back each other up if one agency cannot cover a request. While this practice will certainly expand the agency's capacity, you will want to make sure that the allied agencies maintain the same standards that you would expect from the contracted agency.

- *Responsiveness*

What percentage of all requests is the agency able to fill? This data the agency should be tracking and should be willing to share. Remember that no agency can fill 100 percent of requests.

- *No-show rates*

How often do this agency's in-person interpreters fail to show at appointments? As with response rates, the agency should track this and be willing to share the data.

- *Connect times (for telephonic interpreter services)*

What is the average connect time? Connect times of 45 seconds or less are competitive; more than that is questionable. Also, ask how connect times are calculated. They should be counted from when the call starts to ring at the agency until an interpreter is on the line. You also might want to ask about connect times on your most common languages. Since it may well take longer to get an interpreter in a rare language than in a common one, chances are that connect times for Spanish will be less than the average.

- *Special equipment requirements (for telephonic interpreter services)*

Many telephonic interpreter services will be able to recommend specific speaker phone technologies. A few require particular equipment in order to provide their service. Since additional technology will certainly add to cost while potentially improving quality, it is important to hear what technology upgrades you may need to work with each agency.

- *Disaster recovery system (for telephonic interpreter services)*

If there were to be some sort of national disaster, access to telephonic interpreters would become more important than ever. Or, if there were a local disaster near your agency's call center, communications might be interrupted. Since your agency depends entirely on phone lines and computerized switching systems, what plan is in place if the lines go down? Some telephonic interpreting agencies now have completely redundant communication systems, allowing them to easily switch systems if one technology fails. It is especially important to ask about disaster recovery systems if you are contemplating using a telephonic service as the sole provider of your interpreter services.

- *Switching equipment (for telephonic interpreter services)*

For those with experience with call centers and telecommunications, information on the agency's switching system can tell you a great deal about how prepared it will be to handle a large volume of calls, track connectivity statistics and provide accurate billing and reporting.

- *What additional services are offered?*

As mentioned above, some agencies offer ancillary support services that may be of use to you. The more services they offer, the more of a partner they can become.

Administrative

- *Fees*

Of course you will want to ask about fees. In-person interpreter services are usually charged by the hour, with a one-hour minimum, although this may vary based on location. Telephonic interpreter services are usually charged by the minute. Fees may vary based on language or by the time of day of the service. In addition, there may also be a one-time set-up fee, a monthly minimum, volume discounts and cancellation fees. Make sure you know all the fees before you sign up.

- *Cancellation policies*

What is the agency's cancellation policy? If you cancel a request for an interpreter, will you be charged? Most agencies will not charge if the cancellation is more than 24 hours before the appointment. Some agencies will charge, as they feel it only fair to pay the interpreter whose time has been reserved and who may not be able to get another appointment to replace the cancelled one. Same-day cancellations are almost always charged.

- *Company history*

Learn as much as you can about the people at the agency. Who started it? What was the founder doing beforehand? Does the founder have previous experience in the language field? How long has the agency been in business? How quickly has it grown? Who are the key players at the agency and what are their backgrounds? These questions can give you a feel for the people behind the logo: the people with whom you will be dealing, and the people whom you will need to trust in order to build a working business relationship.

- *Industry involvement*

Is the agency at all involved in helping to build the health care interpreting field? Is the agency a member of CHIA, of the American Translators Association (ATA), of the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC)? Does the agency provide scholarships for interpreters to get training, or support local training efforts? Agencies that are supportive of the field are demonstrating commitment to quality interpreting that may be reflected in their services.

- *Key documents*

Ask to see a standard contract and an example of a billing statement. If you are going to need specific data on your bill that is not routinely provided, bring that up in negotiations to assure that the agency has the capacity to track that data.

Finally, after you have asked all your questions and reviewed all the materials provided to you, ask for references. While it is not appropriate to request a complete client list, agencies should be able to put you in contact with a few current clients. When you talk to the references, ask for specific information as opposed to general impressions.

If you are contracting for telephonic interpreter services, your last step is to request a test call. This means that the agency allows you to put through one interpreter request free of charge in order to test how the service works. You may want to try an uncommon language to see if the agency can really come through, or you may want to request your most commonly needed language, to see how the agency will respond in the situation for which you will most use it. Either way, a test call can be most revealing and will give you a good feel as to how the agency will really function.

Choosing an agency (or agencies) may seem rather complicated, however a quality agency will be your best partner in meeting your language needs. Having to recontract with new agencies because the old ones didn't work out is a major investment of effort. It's worth the time up front to choose an agency that can serve your needs well so that you can both get about the business of providing language access.

How Do I Use an Agency?

A few words on working with agencies: each agency will be a bit different in how it does business. How organized you are internally, however, will have a large affect on how smoothly the collaboration goes.

First of all, make sure your internal systems are in place. It should be clear to employees when the need for an interpreter should be noted, who is responsible for ordering the interpreter and how that is to be done. In addition, staff should know who has the responsibility to cancel the interpreter if the patient cancels, whose responsibility it is to sign the interpreter in and out if you require signed encounter forms, and whose responsibility it is to dismiss the interpreter if the patient does not show up. While doing all this by phone may be easier, doing all transactions by fax will leave a paper trail that may be important in case of disputes.

When you order the interpreter, you should be able to provide the patient's name and some sort of identification number, the provider's name and the date, time and location of the appointment. Also, be sure you know about how long you'll need the interpreter; it is very expensive to overbook an interpreter's time since you are paying by the hour, however it is also nonproductive to underbook an interpreter who then may need to leave for another appointment before the first one is completed. Additional information that is helpful for the interpreter to know is the patient's gender and age, as this gives the interpreter important clues as to how the patient should be addressed. Finally, any information you can give the agency as to the nature of the appointment will allow the interpreter to come better prepared.

The most important part in working with an agency is clear communication. If you have a concern or complaint, a quality agency will want to know about it. The agency becomes part of your language access team, so the better the teamwork, the more effective your interpreter service.

How Do I Monitor an Agency's Performance?

There are a number of ways to monitor an agency's performance. One is to track requests filled, requests returned, no-show and late arrival rates, billing error rates, complaints from providers, responsiveness, resolution of problems, and reoccurrence of problems. This data can usually be tracked electronically on a routine basis with a minimum of effort.

Another way is to actively solicit feedback from your front-desk and provider staff about the agency, either through routine feedback or periodic surveys. How easy is it to order an interpreter? How often do the interpreters arrive late? Are the interpreters polite? Do they engage in appropriate protocols? Do staff members have any reason to comment on the quality of the interpretation? While actively requesting feedback from the people who are using the agency on a daily basis is more cumbersome than electronic tracking, it is the best way of monitoring how the agency is doing.

What If There Are No Language Agencies in Your Area?

If your institution is located in California, north of Sacramento, east of the Sierra Nevada, or in areas the state has designated as “frontier,” you may be unable to find agencies to help meet your language needs in person (the author was unable to find any in those areas for this survey). You do have some options though.

- Call on agencies in surrounding regions; some may be willing to send interpreters or may even decide to open a branch in your region if demand is high enough.
- Contract with a telephonic interpreting agency to provide interpreter services over the phone.
- If you are one of the 26 rural hospitals in northern California where videoconferencing capacity has been installed for telemedicine and educational purposes, take advantage of this infrastructure to get an interpreter on screen. Some agencies now have the capacity to accommodate this sort of request.

Conclusion

Language agencies can be a vital part of your institution's language access program. Knowing how to choose a quality agency and how to work effectively with that agency is the key to successfully integrating that service into your institution's functioning. Clear communication, clear expectations, and working in partnership will lead to better language access for patients and more effective service provision.

Endnotes

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- ⁴ For a discussion of models of provision of interpreter services, please see Downing, Bruce and Cynthia Roat, *Models for the Provision of Language Access in Health Care Settings*, available online at www.ncihc.org.
- ⁵ Interpretation services are services that allow an oral or signed message to be rendered in a different language. Translation services allow a written message to be rendered in a different language.
- ⁶ For a compendium of training programs in the state of California, see Roat, Cynthia E, *Health Care Interpreter Training Programs in California*, available on the Web site of The California Endowment at www.calendow.org.
- ⁷ Certification refers to a scientifically validated and reliable evaluation process in which particular defined and published skills of an individual are tested against a defined and published standard.
- ⁸ Available on the CHIA website at www.chia.ws.
- ⁹ The State of California defines a frontier region as one with a population of fewer than 12 inhabitants per square mile.

Compendium of Foreign Language Agencies Serving Health Care Organizations in the State of California

About the agencies in this compendium

The agencies profiled in this section were chosen because they are already serving health and human service providers in California. They run the gamut from large and highly sophisticated to small and less formalized. **This is by no means, nor was it meant to be, a comprehensive list of language agencies in California.** There are many fine language agencies serving the state that were not able to be included in the scope of this project. The principal focus of this compendium is on agencies providing foreign language interpretation, as opposed to translation or sign language interpretation, since this seems to be where the greatest deficit is found.

The survey

Each agency in this compendium completed a standardized survey form, for which the author would like to thank those involved. (A copy of the survey form can be found in Appendix A.) Responses to that survey have been reproduced here faithfully; where questions were skipped, the section has been removed from the profile. Neither the author nor The California Endowment guarantees the accuracy of the information. In reviewing each profile, the reader should keep in mind that agencies often develop quickly, and that interpreter availability, internal processes and services offered can change rapidly. Potential clients should, therefore, contact each agency directly for up-to-date information.

Listing

The following language agencies are profiled in this compendium.

Region 1: Southern and Inland

(San Diego, Imperial, Riverside, San Bernadino, Orange, Mariposa, Inyo, Mono, and Tuolumne counties)

Catholic Charities, Diocese of San Diego19

Region 2: Los Angeles Plus

(Los Angeles, Ventura, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara counties)

PALS for Health 21

Interpreting Services International 23

Exotic Languages Agency 27

ALLSPEAK Interpreting Services 29

Region 3: Bay Area

(Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Santa Clara, San Francisco, San Mateo, Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties)

Asian Health Services Language Cooperative 31

Lan Do and Associates 33

Interpreters Unlimited 35

Region 4: Central Valley

(Fresno, Kings, Kern, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare counties)

Healthy House Language Bank 37

Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo

Indígena Oaxaqueño, Inc 39

Region 5: Sacramento and North Coast

(Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Solano, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba counties)

Vietnamese Voluntary Foundation	41
Hmong Women’s Heritage Association	43
Carmazzi and Associates	44
Language World	46

Region 6: Northern California

(Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Sonoma, Trinity counties)

No language agencies based in these counties were found.

Region 7: Far North

(Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, and Tehama counties)

No language agencies based in these counties were found.

Statewide telephonic interpreter agencies

Language Line Services	48
Pacific Interpreters	53
Tele-Interpreters®	56

Catholic Charities, Diocese of San Diego (The San Diego Language Bank)

Contact Information

Terry Clark, Program Manager,
Musab Jabbar, Program Assistant
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San Diego, CA 92120
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Fax: (619) 287-6328
E-mail: Tclark@ccdsd.org, mjabbar@ccdsd.org

Agency Services

Types of services:

In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services, translation services.

Service area:

In-person interpreting services: Central, south and east county (San Diego) Telephonic interpreting services: San Diego County
Translation services: Nationwide.

Industries served: Health care, social service, legal, commercial

Languages provided¹:

Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, Kurdish, Chaldean, Farsi, Nuer, Amharic, Tigrinian, Serbo-Croatian, Albanian, French, Lao, Khmer, Tagalog, Acholi, Azerbaijani, Bari, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Czech, Dari, Dinka, German, Hmong, Hindi, Italian, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Lingala, Luganda, Luo-Acholi, Pashto, Polish, Russian, Somali, Swahili, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian and Urdu.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

Interpreters are screened through an initial interview. With regards to higher education, about 7 percent of the active interpreters/translator base has some college, about 82 percent has a college degree and about 11 percent has an advanced degree.

Training:

Catholic Charities requires all interpreters to take Bridging the Gap, a 40-hour training program. During the training, the following skills are evaluated: basic language skills, industry-specific terminology, ethics, written translation, cultural awareness and integrated interpreting skills. Catholic Charities also gives an eight-hour training in mental health interpreting. For more information, contact Terry Clark.

Practicum: An informal practicum is done through observing interpreters provide interpretation in-house.

Continuing education:
No continuing education is required.

Certification:
About 10 percent of interpreters are certified by the State of California, and about 5 percent are certified for Federal Court.

Quality assurance, long term:
Monitoring is done through client feedback and in-house interpreting.

Administration

Administrative policies:

Hours of operation:	8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday to Friday
Confirmation policy ² :	within two business days, maximum
Cancellation policy ³ :	one business day
Complaint policy:	complaints are handled by the program manager.

Pricing:

In-person interpreting: \$26- \$42 per hour
Telephonic interpreting: \$26-\$40 per hour
Translation services: \$0.24 - \$0.34 per word
Prices vary per language based on the complexity of the language
No account set-up fee.

Billing:

Monthly billing, net 30
Late fees are not assessed.
Bills can include the following information: date,
reference number, and contact person

For telephonic providers:

Limited test calls prior to contract: Not allowed.
Connect times: 10 minutes from first ring till when an interpreter is on the line.
Disaster Recovery Process: none

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

²Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?

³Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

PALS for Health (Pacific Asian Language Services)

Contact Information

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Heng L. Foong, Program Director
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Los Angeles, CA 90015
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E-mail: palshealth@earthlink.net

Agency Services

Types of services:

In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services, translation services, cultural trainings (incorporates how to use interpreters effectively).

Service area

In-person interpreting services: Los Angeles and Orange counties (OC) Telephonic interpreting services: So far LA and OC but we're flexible. All our clients who currently use this service are the ones who use our face-to-face service. Translation services: Open Cultural trainings: Los Angeles and Orange Counties (but we also speak at conferences).

Industries served: Health care, social service, conference.

Languages provided!:

Cambodian, Cantonese, Korean, Laotian, Japanese, Mandarin, Thai and Vietnamese.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

All potential interpreters must complete the following steps: submit resume and application, face-to-face interview, proficiency exam, and training. Our first point of contact with potential interpreters is usually by telephone (90 percent) or during an outreach (10 percent). We take this opportunity to informally assess the candidate's English speaking ability, as well as his/her interest in interpretation and community service. PALS for Health has an in-house proficiency assessment that evaluates general interpreting knowledge, grammar, medical terminology, interpretation and translation skills. This tool was created in late 1999 and we are in the process of updating its content. The assessment is also being adapted into Armenian, Somali and Spanish. As regards formal education, about 18 percent of the interpreter/translator base has at least some college, 55 percent has a college degree, and 27 percent has an advanced degrees.

Training:

Interpreters are required to take 40 hours of training, offered at PALS offices in Los Angeles and Garden Grove. For more information on this training, call PALS.

Practicum:

No practicum is required, however, newly trained interpreters have the option of shadowing an “experienced” interpreter if permission is given by the patient and provider.

Continuing Education:

PALS requires four hours of continuing education per year. We currently facilitate continuing education sessions by surveying language consultants for topics of interest. A PALS for Health staff then locates an educator and schedules the training. For example, our tuberculosis workshop was conducted by Robert Miodovski, MPH, a health educator at Los Angeles County DHS TB Control. Each workshop session is 2 hours and a pre/post test is administered. We offer a minimum of two workshops a year. Language consultants are also informed of any pertinent sessions that are offered by other health or social service agencies.

Certification:

100 percent of interpreters are certified through an internal process. None of PALS’ sign language interpreters are RID or NAD certified. None of PALS’ translators are ATA certified.

Quality assurance, long term:

PALS monitors service quality over time through client surveys, provider surveys, and staff observation of interpretation sessions.

Administration**Administrative policies**

Hours of operation: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. (We sometimes outreach on weekends.)
 Confirmation policy²: 24 – 72 hours
 Cancellation policy³: 24 hours
 Complaint policy: Complaints from providers and/or patients are accepted over the telephone or in writing. After further investigation a detailed written resolution is sent to the complainant. Complaints should be addressed to the Program Manager of Language Services or the Program Director.

Pricing:

In-person interpreting: \$65-75 per hour
 Telephonic interpreting: \$65-75 per hour, billed in 15-minute increments.
 Translation services: \$90 per page (translate, review, typeset)
 No language differential. No account set-up fee.

Billing:

Monthly or bi-monthly billing, net 30, late fees are not assessed. Bills can include the following information: Date, time, location and provider involved. If required we will also attach our Consultant Statement Form which displays provider signatures.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

²Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?

³Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

Interpreting Services International

Contact Information

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Fax: 818-753-9617
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Agency Services

Types of services:

In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services, translation services, language assessments, interpreter training, cultural skills building seminars.

Service area:

In-person interpreting services: nationwide
Telephonic interpreting services: globally
Translation services: globally
Language assessments: globally
Training seminars: globally

Industries served:

Health care, social service, legal, commercial, conference, insurance, government (local, state, federal).

Languages provided¹:

Spanish, French, Italian, German, Portuguese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Khmer, Hmong, Lao, Vietnamese, Armenian, Russian, Hebrew, Arabic, Tagalog, Pashtu, Urdu, Punjabi. ISI has professional interpreters available in all the languages of identified limited- and non-English speakers in the United States.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

Our first step is to verify the validity of certification and accreditation certificates. Subsequently an interview is set-up in order to determine applicants' abilities and availability. References are checked. Once this step is completed, individuals are started on a small project basis. Written translations are always reviewed by a second, experienced linguist. These first projects are followed by a call to our client to determine linguists' capabilities. The initial screening evaluates the following skills: basic language skills, industry-specific terminology, ethics, written translation, cultural awareness, integrated interpreting skills, and sight translation. With regards to formal education, about 10 percent of the active interpreter/translator base has some college, 40 percent have a college degree and 50 percent have advanced degrees.

Training:

ISI interpreters and translators are required to have formal training, which they get through ISI, Monterey Institute, various international organizations, Judicial Council of California, American Translators Association, colleges and universities throughout the world, etc. For more information, contact those programs directly.

Practicum: A 40-hour practicum is required.

Continuing Education: ISI requires 24 hours of CE every two years.

Certification:

10 percent of interpreters are certified through an internal process, 90 percent by the State of California, and 20 percent for Federal Court. Over 75 percent of translators are certified by the ATA.

Quality assurance, long term:

Our interpreters are certified and, as part of the certification requirements, they must interpret a minimum of 40 cases every 24 months as well as complete 24 hours of continuing education units during the same period of time. All of our translation work goes through two additional editing steps. These edits are conducted by translators accredited in a particular language and field of expertise. In some instances, an in-country review step is added to the process. We have ongoing evaluations steps in the form of written and telephone surveys conducted with our clients.

Administration**Administrative policies:**

Hours of operation: 8 a.m. – 6 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Confirmation policy²: Typically within an hour, many at time of request.

Cancellation policy³: Between 12 and 48 hours. The cancellation time is specified at the time the appointment is made.

Complaint policy: Complaints are presented either by phone, e-mail or regular mail. Following a complaint ISI interviews the person filing the complaint as well as the individual about whom the complaint was presented. All complaints are taken very seriously and are acted upon immediately.

Pricing:

In-person interpreting: varies

Telephonic interpreting: varies

Translation services: varies

There is a language differential.

No account set-up fee.

Billing:

Daily billing, due on receipt: delinquent after 30 days. We have a custom database that enables us to add most information a client requires for tracking purposes

For telephonic providers:

Limited test calls prior to contract are allowed.

Additional Comments

Since 1982, ISI has been providing a full range of translation, interpreting, multicultural communication and education services to the health care community as well as other industries. We have assisted numerous organizations in providing culturally and linguistically competent services. Our client list includes CIGNA, Kaiser Permanente, Tenet Health, Beth-Israel Hospital, Prudential, Catholic Healthcare West, City of Hope, Sisters of Providence, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Little Company of Mary Health Services, University of Illinois at Chicago Medical Center, University of New Mexico at Albuquerque, Lovelace Healthcare Systems and many others.

At ISI, translation is a team process that exceeds the required standards set forth by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Department of Health and Human Services. These requirements call for equal access to health care for linguistically and culturally diverse patient populations. ISI project managers oversee the entire project, including the selection of the translation team—experienced translators, editors, terminology managers, proofreaders and desktop publishers. Document creation with double byte character systems or right-to-left alphabets creates challenges. We have solutions! We specialize in the translation for the non-English-speaking communities of the United States.

Moreover, our CommuniCare department is comprised of professional linguists who specialize in healthcare translations and interpretation. Our custom database and project-tracking program assists our office staff in matching the requirements of the assignment to the skills of the linguists. Our policy calls for use of native-speakers with university-level and subject-specific proficiency to ensure a written translation that is as precise as the original text and oral interpretation that mirrors the source message. Our projects are coordinated to safeguard deadlines, specifications and style.

Additionally, we can assist you with multilingual web pages, audiotapes, video, voice-overs, screens, slides or animation. We will accommodate your foreign language needs in any medium. We offer the latest in multilingual desktop publishing capabilities, including non-Roman alphabets such as Russian, Khmer, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Armenian. Final output can be delivered as electronic files, as laser printed camera-ready hard copies, or as film.

ISI has its roots in providing interpreters for medical/legal appointments. In 1982, long before medical interpreting certification was available, ISI filled a need for providing professional, competent interpreters for medical and legal settings. ISI has been at the forefront of advocating for the development of stringent criteria for assessment of interpreter qualifications. As such, we have developed strong relationships with the finest and most reliable certified and registered interpreters today.

Assignments range from medical settings such as doctors' offices, hospitals and clinics, to courtrooms, attorneys' offices, public hearings, telephone conferences and recording studios. We can arrange simultaneous equipment set-ups for meetings or telephone conferencing. In short, ISI is a full-service language bureau.

Our office staff follows up with clients to ensure their satisfaction with the service provided. Additionally, our staff is trained to take all requests for interpreters in a friendly, efficient and professional manner. All appointments are reconfirmed the day before to avoid mistakes or miscommunications. All assignments are entered in our custom scheduling database from which we can generate schedules, payroll, reports and invoicing. “Bridging the gap” can be approached from many different directions. In addition to providing the full range of interpreting and translation services, we have developed a number of other programs to improve communication.

ISI ITAP is our nationally recognized “Interpreter Training and Assessment Program.” Since its inception in 1990, ITAP has helped identify, screen, and improve the skills of hundreds of bilingual staff members at medical facilities throughout the United States including University of California, San Francisco; Cedars-Sinai Medical Center; and CIGNA HealthCare.

Spanish For Medical Providers (SMP)

In 1992, Interpreting Services International, Inc., took the next logical step in improvement of patient relations. Spanish for Medical Providers was the outcome of our wish to take a more direct approach to communication. This program, developed initially for Kaiser Permanente, is a ten-hour workshop that gives hands-on Spanish experience to the non-Spanish-speaking healthcare provider. Techniques are taught to enable providers to control the taking of an examination or history report.

Wherever there is a need for language or cultural support, ISI has your language solution.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

²Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?

³Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

Exotic Languages Agency

Contact Information

Adriana Chirilov, President
Christine Kreuder, Operations Manager
333 City Boulevard West
Suite #630
Orange, California 92866
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Fax: (714) 704-1870
E-mail: ela@ela1.com

Agency Services

- Types of services:** In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services, translation services, escort interpreting services, cultural training, language training.
- Service area:** In-person interpreting services: California
Telephonic interpreting services: nationwide
Translation services: U.S. and world-wide
Language assessments: globally
Cultural Training – anywhere in the U.S.
Language Training – anywhere in the U.S.
Escort Interpreting – anywhere worldwide
- Industries served:** Health care, social service, legal, commercial, conference, insurance, government .
- Languages provided:** We provide support for over 200 languages.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

Screening includes resumes, interviews, referrals from clients, sample translations. The screening process evaluates basic language skills, industry-specific terminology, ethics, written translation, cultural awareness, integrated interpreting skills, and sight translation. With regards to formal education, about 30 percent of the interpreter pool has an advanced degree, about 70 at least a college degree and 85 percent at least some college level study.

Training:

All interpreters are required to have training as an interpreter. ELA interpreters are trained in schools of interpretation in the U.S. and abroad. For more information on training programs, please contact those schools directly.

Practicum:

A practicum of undetermined length is required for interpreters of languages with large circulation, but not in others.

Continuing Education: ELA requires 25 hours of CE every year.

Certification:

60 percent of interpreters are certified through an internal process, 25 percent by the State of California, 10 percent for Federal Court and 5 percent by schools of interpreting abroad. Among ASL interpreters, 50 percent are RID certified and 50 percent are certified by the NAD. About 35 percent of translators are accredited by the ATA.

Quality assurance, long term:

Quality is maintained over time through the use of surveys and questionnaires to clients, through taking actions for improving service, through the qualification and disqualification of interpreters/translators, and through the maintenance of records of interpreters and translators.

Administration**Administrative policies:**

Hours of operation: 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.; also available weekends and evenings.
 Confirmation policy²: Same day for next day assignment, 48-72 hours for others.
 Cancellation policy³: Within 24 hours.
 Complaint policy: We listen to both parties, weighing the circumstances and taking appropriate measures. If our interpreter/translator is at fault, discounts and free assignments are offered. If the complaint is unfounded, we explain politely in writing.

Pricing: In-person interpreting: \$250/395 per half day during business hours, time-and-a-half or double-time for after hours. Translation services: \$.20 - \$.35 per word. There is a language differential, depending on the language. No account set-up fee.

Billing: Billing is done net 30 days. A late fee of 1.8 percent is charged on overdue payments. The following information can be provided on a bill: invoice number, date, time & duration of assignment. Case name and number. Any information that client would specifically wish to have such as a P.O. #.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.
²Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?
³Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

ALLSPEAK Interpreting Services

Contact Information

Tatiana Vorobieff, Owner
P.O. Box 1606
Glendale, CA 91209-1606
Tel: 818-246-1515
Fax: 818-246-4211
E-mail: ALLSPEAKINT@aol.com

Agency services

- Types of services:** In-person interpreting services.
- Service area:** Southern California.
- Industries served:** Health care, social service, legal, commercial, conference, insurance, general.
- Languages provided¹:** Arabic, Armenian, Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin and other Chinese dialects), Dari, Farsi, French, German, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Khmer (Cambodian), Korean, Laotian, Punjabi, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, Tagalog (Filipino), Thai, Vietnamese and many others.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

Our professional qualified interpreters are carefully screened for proficiency and accuracy on their bilingual skills, education, industry knowledge and experience on the appropriate technical field they are to interpret such as health care, legal, commercial, etc. The screening process evaluates the following: basic language skills, industry-specific terminology, ethics, written translation, cultural awareness, integrated interpreting skills and sight translation. Regarding formal education, about 70 percent of the interpreter pool has an advanced degree, about 20 a college degree and 10 percent some college.

Training:

Interpreters are required to have basic training in interpreting; the length of training varies depending on the industry field in which they interpret. Some are trained at private institutions and organizations, colleges and universities. Others are trained on the job by skilled professional interpreters. For more information on these training programs, please contact ALLSPEAK.

Practicum:

A practicum is required, the length of which depends on the industry field in which they interpret.

Continuing Education:

We encourage all interpreters to continue their education for self-improvement. In some industry fields, continuing education is required.

Certification:

About 50 percent of the interpreter pool is certified by the State of California, 10 percent for Federal Court and 40 percent by private organizations, institutions, schools, colleges and/or universities. About 50 percent of our translators are ATA accredited.

Quality assurance, long term: We monitor and perform random spot checking on a daily basis.

Administration**Administrative policies:**

Hours of operation: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Confirmation policy²: Immediate confirmation for most languages.

Cancellation policy³: If cancellation is within 24 hours of the assignment date, the full agreed fee will be charged.

Complaint policy: Directly with management/owner.

Pricing: In-person interpreting: Depends on the assignment and on how exotic the language requested. There is a language differential. No account set-up fee.

Billing: Daily billing, net 30, late fees are not assessed. Bills can include any tracking information that the client requires.

Additional Comments

ALLSPEAK's goal is to provide our clients with professional quality interpreting services in the medical, legal, professional business, hearings, statements, workers' compensation, insurance, travel and tour fields, as well as many others.

Our professional qualified interpreters are highly trained and experienced in all aspects of interpreting.

An important factor of our interpreters is that besides being bilingual, they are also bicultural with knowledge of their native customs, lifestyles, and popular expressions peculiar to a particular language. This allows them to communicate the message clearly in the target language.

Our mission is to provide our clients with professional "excellent customer service."

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

²Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?

³Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

Asian Health Services Language Cooperative

Contact Information

Mark Won, Interpretation Services Coordinator
818 Webster Street
Oakland, CA 94607
Tel: 510-986-6830
Fax: 510-986-6866
E-mail: mwon@ahschc.org

Agency services

Types of services: In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services, translation services, focus groups.

Service area: In-person interpreting services: Alameda County
Telephonic interpreting services: Alameda County
Translation services: Nationwide
Focus groups: Nationwide

Industries served: Health care.

Languages provided¹: Cantonese, Mandarin, Spanish, Vietnamese, Farsi, Korean, and Cambodian.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening: Application is reviewed; basic language skills are screened.

Training:

AHS requires all interpreters to take a 50-hour training, offered by AHS. For more information on the training, call 510-986-6830 or look on the AHS website: www.ahschc.org.

Practicum: Not required.

Continuing Education: Not required.

Administration

Administrative policies:

Hours of operation: 8 – 10 a.m., daily.
Cancellation policy²: 24 hours
Complaint policy: All complaints will be followed up on.

Pricing:

In-person interpreting: \$42- \$46 per hour during business hours, \$42-
\$52 per hour nights and weekends.
Telephonic interpreting: \$1.80 per minute during business hours,
\$2 per minute nights and weekends.
Translation services: \$120 per page.
No language differential.
No account set-up fee.

Billing:

Monthly for interpreting, as project completed for translation; late fees
are assessed at 3 percent per month. Bills can include the following
information: patient name, MR#, provider's name, department.

For telephonic providers: Limited test calls prior to contract not allowed.

Connect times: 30-60 seconds from first ring until an interpreter is on
the line.

Disaster Recovery Process: systems redundant.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

²Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

Lan Do and Associates, LLC

Contact Information

Lan Do, President
970 Harrison Street
San Francisco, Ca 94107
Tel: 415-978-2788
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Agency Services

Types of services: In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services, translation services.

Service area: In-person interpreting services: statewide.
Telephonic interpreting services: anywhere.
Translation services: anywhere.

Industries served: Health care, social service, legal, commercial, conference, insurance, state and federal government.

Languages provided: Over 68 main languages.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

The following skills are evaluated during the screening process: basic language skills, industry-specific terminology, ethics, written translation, cultural awareness, integrated interpreting skills, sight translation. As regards formal education, 9 percent of the active interpreter/translator base has some college, 8 percent has a college degree, and 3 percent has an advanced degree.

Training: Training is required. Lan Do's interpreters are trained at colleges, universities and trade colleges. For more information about the training required, call Lan Do.

Practicum: Required.

Continuing Education: Required.

Certification: About 30 percent of interpreters are certified through an internal process, 50 percent by the state of California, 20 percent for Federal Court and 20 percent by the ATA. Of sign language interpreters, 98 percent are RID certified, and 2 percent are NAD certified. About 60 percent of Lan Do's translators are ATA certified.

Quality assurance, long term: Follow-up calls to clients. Recruiting well-qualified, certified interpreters and translators. Referring interpreters and translators to attend trainings and seminars.

Administration

Administrative policies:

Hours of operation: 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Confirmation policy²: 4 hours
Cancellation policy³: 24 hours
Complaint policy: Via telephone or writing to Lan Do.

Pricing: Call for rate quotes.
There is a language differential.
No account set-up fee.

Billing: Monthly, due upon receipt, late fees are not assessed.
Bills can include the following information: Interpreters are requested to ask for signatures and time out from the requesters/providers.

For telephonic providers: Limited test calls prior to contract are allowed.
Connect times: 5 minutes
Disaster Recovery Process: redundant systems.

Additional Comments:

We have one of the largest pools of interpreters/translators in the state of California. Most of our interpreters/translators are either well-qualified, well-experienced, and/or certified. Our interpreters are always very dependable, professional and punctual. Our clients are very satisfied with our services.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

²Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?

³Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

Interpreters Unlimited

Contact Information

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PO Box 27660
San Diego, CA 92198
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Fax: (800) 726-9822
E-mail: info@iugroup.com

Agency Services

- Types of services:** In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services.
- Service area:** In-person interpreting services: California.
Telephonic interpreting services: Nationwide.
Translation services:
- Industries served:** Health care, social service, legal, commercial, insurance, government.
- Languages provided¹:** All common languages – over 150 languages.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening: During the screening process, the following skills are evaluated: basic language skills, industry-specific terminology, ethics and cultural awareness.

Administration

Administrative policies

- Hours of operation: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.
- Confirmation policy²: As requested at time of order
- Cancellation policy³: One workday (i.e. cancel before the appointment time on the working day prior to the day of the appointment to avoid a fee)
- Complaint policy: With assiduity, by the scheduling manager or by an officer of the company, as necessary

- Billing:** Per event or per contract, net 30 or per contract, late fees are not assessed. Bills can include the following information: As required; normally where, when, who ordered, language, duration, type of appointment, client name and identifying data as required.

Additional Comments

It is unclear to us how to answer the questions about percentages certified above because we have over 5,000 interpreters covering all languages: we have both certified, provisionally certified, and uncertified interpreters in all certifiable languages; we have registered and unregistered interpreters in uncertifiable languages; we have ASL interpreters certified at differing RID levels; we have interpreters certified at the Federal level. In short, we provide interpreters at whatever level the client requires. We have also chosen not to disclose some of our internal processes – QA, pricing, monitoring, intake processes: however, we are happy to discuss these with any potential customer. We will also fax any prospective customer a fee schedule. Our pricing system is straightforward and published, but we cannot squeeze it into the categories defined in the questionnaire.

We would like to mention that we supply interpreters under contract throughout California to many quality-conscious organizations: large hospitals, government departments, county health organizations as well as commercial, insurance and legal clients. We have been providing interpreters in California for more than 30 years so our internal controls are fully developed.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

²Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?

³Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

Healthy House Language Bank

Contact Information

Liz Chavez, Manager
1729 Canal St.
Merced, CA 95340
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Fax: 209-724-0153
E-mail: e.chavez@gvhc.org

Agency services

Types of services: In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services (rare cases).
Service area: In-person interpreting services: Merced.
Industries served: Health care, social service.
Languages provided: Spanish, Hmong, Lao, Portuguese, Punjabi and Mien.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

Interpreters are screened using a series of language proficiency tests, including a computer-generated test, a test of medical terminology and a test of sight translation. As regards level of formal education, some of the interpreter base has some college, some a college degree and some an advanced degree.

Training:

A 40-hour training is required, provided by Healthy House. For more information on the training program, call the Healthy House offices.

Practicum: A practicum is required; the length depends on the interpreter's language skills.

Continuing Education: Fifteen hours of continuing education is required per year.

Certification:

100 percent of interpreters are certified through an internal process; 25 percent are also certified for Federal Court.

Quality assurance, long term: Lead interpreters periodically observe interpreters.

Administration

Administrative policies:

Hours of operation: 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.
Confirmation policy²: 30 minutes.
Cancellation policy³: Before an interpreter has been dispatched.
Complaint policy: Through manager.

Pricing:

In-person interpreting: \$25 per hour during business hours,
\$35 per hour nights weekends.
No language differential.
No account set-up fee.

Billing:

Weekly billing, terms per contract, late fees are assessed. Bills can include the following information: client name, date of service, department of hospital, language, length of session, contact information. Bills can include the following information: client name, date of service, department of hospital, language, length of session, contact information.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

²Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?

³Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño, Inc

Contact Information

Leoncio Vásquez
Outreach Worker/Mixteco Interpreter
Frente Oaxaqueño
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E-mail: lvasquez@sbcglobal.net

Agency services

- Types of services:** In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services.
- Service area:** In California: Arvin/Lamont, Taft, Visalia, Tulare, Fresno, Madera, Fairfield, Chowchilla, Watsonville, Monterey, Oxnard, Los Angeles, Fullerton. We also provide services in Arizona, Oregon, Georgia, North Carolina, New York, and Florida.
- Industries served:** Health care, social service, legal, insurance, immigration.
- Languages provided¹:** Mixteco Bajo, Mixteco Alto, Zapoteco, Triqui, Chatino.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

Potential candidates are screened by a linguist in the indigenous languages to assure that they are fluent. In addition, they take a test in Spanish to assure fluency in Spanish. The following is tested in the screening process: basic language skills, industry-specific terminology and ethics.

Training: Interpreters are required to have training. They are trained through a variety of programs, including: the Graduate school of translation and interpretation of the Monterey Institute of International Studies, the California Court Interpreters Association, Interpreting at California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board, California Health Collaborative, Berlitz GlobalNET. Interested parties can call (559) 499-1178 to learn more about these training programs.

Practicum: A practicum of an unspecified length is required.

Continuing Education:

An unspecified number of hours of continuing education are required each year.

Certification:

All the interpreters are certified by internal process.

Administration**Administrative policies:**

Confirmation policy²: Each interpreter handles his or her cases individually and it depends on them.

Cancellation policy³: 24 hours

Pricing: In-person interpreting: Depends on each contractor (varies from \$92 to \$147 up to half a day). No account set-up fee.

Billing: Monthly billing, late fees are not assessed. Billing is done manually.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

²Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?

³Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

Vietnamese Voluntary Foundation, Inc. (VIVO)

Contact Information

Linda Hobson, Project Coordinator
4410 N. Pershing Ave., Suite C4-5
Stockton, CA 95207
Tel: 209-475-9454
Fax: 209-475-9341
E-mail: vivosjc@sbcglobal.net

Agency Services

Types of services: In-person interpreting services, translation services, interpreter training (not currently).

Service area: In-person interpreting services: Stockton
Translation services: California; other areas will be considered.
Interpreter training: Stockton only (not current)

Industries served: Health care, social service.

Languages provided: Vietnamese, Hmong, Lao, and Cambodian.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

Staff who provide interpretation/translation do so on an occasional basis; this is not their primary activity. As regards formal education, about half have some college education.

Training:

Staff is not required to have training in this area; however, we have provided a training class for medical interpreters. For more information on this training program, please contact Linda Hobson.

Practicum:

A 100-hour practicum was required as part of the above-mentioned class. Trainees are observed by hospital or other staff, not by interpreters.

Continuing Education: not required.

Certification:

No certification required, however graduates of the above-mentioned course are tested for course content and have a supervised practicum in a hospital, doctor's office or related setting. None of VIVO's translators are accredited by ATA.

Quality assurance, long term:

Consultation with the client to determine client satisfaction, to receive client information and comments.

Administration**Administrative policies:**

Hours of operation: 8 a.m. – noon, 1 – 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.
Confirmation policy²: 24 hours
Cancellation policy³: 24 hours
Complaint policy: Complaints are handled on a case-by-case basis.

Pricing:

In-person interpreting: \$40 per hour during business hours; prices vary nights and weekends.
Translation services: \$40 per page
No language differential.
No account set-up fee.

Billing:

Monthly billing, net 30, late fees are not assessed.
Bills can include the following information: language, time and place of service, title of written material to be translated.

Additional Comments

Our agency provides interpretation/translation services as an additional service to assist refugees and immigrants, and agencies and individuals who serve refugees and immigrants.

Our agency has provided a 10-week course in medical interpreting with a 100-hour practicum for speakers of Southeast Asian Languages. Graduates of this course may find employment in medical or social service settings, and may work as independent contractors.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

²Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?

³Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

Hmong Women's Heritage Association

Contact Information

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Sacramento, CA 95822
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E-mail: youalo@hmongwomenheritage.org

Agency Services

Types of services: In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services, social services for Hmong families.

Service area: Sacramento and Yolo counties.

Industries served: Health care, social service, legal, conference.

Languages provided¹: Hmong.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

Interpreters are not screened, but undergo supervised training. They are evaluated for basic language skills, ethics, cultural awareness, integrated interpreting skills and sight translation. As regards formal education, some of the interpreters have college degrees and others have some college level study.

Training:

All interpreters are required to go through a 40-hour in-house training specific to health care interpreting, called "Connecting Worlds." For more information about this training, contact us at (916) 394-1405.

Practicum: Not required.

Continuing Education: Not required.

Certification: Not available in Hmong.

Administration

Administrative policies:

Hours of operation: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

Carmazzi and Associates

Contact Information

James Carmazzi, Director of Corporate Development
Michelle Melrose, Director of Program Development
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Carmichael, CA 95609-2751
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Fax: 916-488-2498
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Agency Services

Types of services: In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services, translation services, ESL classes for companies that hire LEP staff, Spanish language classes for management staff and executives.

Service area: In-person interpreting services: California (in the process of expanding)
Telephonic interpreting services: Anywhere
Translation services: Anywhere
Language classes: California, with potential to expand

Industries served: Health care, social service, legal, commercial, conference, insurance.

Languages provided: Spanish, Lao, Tagalog, Farsi, Arabic, German, Punjabi, Portuguese, Romanian, Italian, Cambodian, Cantonese, Chinese, Mandarin, French, French Creole, Greek, Hindi, Hmong, Ilocano, Korean, Mien, Urdu, Russian, Swedish, Sign Language, Visayan, Vietnamese, Yugoslavian

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

Screening includes review of resume, certification and experience; a telephone and/or face-to-face interview where language skills, vocabulary and other factors are evaluated. The screening process evaluates basic language skills, industry-specific terminology, ethics, written translation, cultural awareness, integrated interpreting skills and sight translation. As regards formal education, about 30 percent of interpreters have advanced degrees, about 40 have a college degree and about 30 percent have some college-level study.

Training:

Interpreters are required to be trained. They receive training through both in-house and state processes, seminars, workshops and a practicum. For more information about the training program, please call the Carmazzi and Associates office.

Practicum: A 20 hour practicum is required.

Continuing Education:

Continuing education is required: the total number of hours is still to be determined.

Certification:

All Carmazzi interpreters are certified by an internal process. All ASL interpreters are certified by either RID or NAD. The percentage of translators accredited by the ATA varies depending on the project.

Quality assurance, long term:

Quality, consistency, accuracy — our records speak for themselves as far as our clients are concerned. We have had consistent business with the majority of our clients since the beginning of this business endeavor.

Administration

Administrative policies:

Hours of operation: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Confirmation policy²: During normal business hours, usually within 24-48 hours, depending on the date of a request. Urgent requests are immediately confirmed.
Cancellation policy³: 24 hours
Complaint policy: The Case Manager takes on and settles complaints by communicating with all parties involved. The General Manager and CEO are involved only if necessary.

Pricing:

In-person interpreting: Varies
Telephonic interpreting: Varies
Translation services: Varies
There is a language differential.
No account set-up fee.

Billing:

Daily billing, net 15, late fees are assessed.
Bills can include the following information: itemized services

For telephonic providers: Test calls: The agency will allow for test calls with prior discussion of protocol.
Disaster Recovery Process: Telephone services are redundant.

Additional Comments

Carmazzi and Associates is a member of the California Healthcare Interpreters Association and is actively involved in professionalizing the interpretation and translation industries, simultaneously educating the community.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

²Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?

³Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

Language World, LLC

Contact Information

William Glasser, Partner-Owner
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Sacramento, CA 95821
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Fax: 916-487-7088
E-mail: info@espanart.com

Agency services

Types of services: In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services, translation services.

Service area: In-person interpreting services: 100-mile radius from Sacramento, CA
Telephonic interpreting services: 100-mile radius from Sacramento, CA
Translation services: 100-mile radius from Sacramento, CA.

Industries served: Health care, social service, legal, commercial, conference, insurance.

Languages provided: Arabic, Bosnian, Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, Toishanese), Croatian, Farsi, French, German, Hindi, Hmong, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Mien, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Sindhi, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

Initial interviews for interpreters are done in the non-English language. We contract with individuals who have a strong medical background and are bicultural. Skills evaluated during the screening include: basic language skills, industry-specific terminology, and ethics. As regards level of formal education, some interpreters have some college education, others have a college degree and some have advance degrees. We have two foreign medical graduates working as interpreters while waiting to take their medical board exams.

Training:

No training is required, but we have sent our interpreters to Bridging the Gap, a 40-hour training from the Cross Cultural Health Care Program in Seattle, WA, when it was offered in Sacramento. For more information on this training program, contact the Refugee Health Department of the County of Sacramento Department of Health and Human Services.

Practicum: Not required.

Continuing Education:

15 hours of continuing education is required per year.

Certification:

80 percent of interpreters are certified through an internal process; 10 percent by the State of California, and 10 percent for Federal Court. None of Language World's translators are accredited by the ATA.

Quality assurance, long term:

Quality services are assured through feedback from medical providers, site visits with trainers and ongoing training.

Administration

Administrative policies:

Hours of operation: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Confirmation policy²: Immediate

Cancellation policy³: 24 hours

Complaint policy: Complaints are handled directly by the owner/partner.

Pricing:

Please call for price structure.

There is a language differential.

No account set-up fee.

Billing:

Weekly billing, late fees are not assessed.

Bills can include the following information: all pertinent details of the interpreting or translation assignment.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

²Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?

³Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

Language Line Services

Contact Information

Danyune Geertsens, Director, Training and Quality
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Monterey, CA 93940, U.S.A
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Fax: 831-648-5819
E-mail: danyune@languageline.com

Agency Services

Types of services: Telephonic interpreting services; translation services; certified medical interpreters; LEP Compliance Program (healthcare & govt.); Language Line Phone — dual-handset phone; Language Line University: interpreter training; LLU: language proficiency testing; LLU: Certification testing (in Court and Medical Interpreting); language services and solution consulting.

Service area: Telephonic interpreting services: Global with offices in USA, Canada, Latin America, Japan & UK Translation services: Global with offices in USA, Canada, Latin America, Japan & UK.
Other services: Global with offices in USA, Canada, Latin American, Japan & UK.

Industries served: Health care, social service, legal, commercial, insurance, government, 911.

Languages provided ¹: Afrikaans, Akan, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Assyrian, Azerbaijani, Bahnar, Bambara, Basque, Belorussian, Bengali, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Burmese, Cakchiquel, Cantonese, Catalan, Chao-chow, Chaldean, Chavacano, Cherokee, Croatian, Czech, Dakota, Danish, Dari, Dinka, Dutch, Estonian, Ewe, Farsi, Fijian, Finnish, Flemish, French, French Canadian, Fukienese, Fula, Fuzhou, Ga, Gaddang, Gaelic, Georgian, German, Greek, Gujarati, Haitian Creole, Hakka, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Hmong, Hubie, Hungarian, Hunanese, Ibanag, Ibo, Icelandic, Ilocano, Indonesian, Italian, Jakartanese, Jarai, Javanese, Japanese, Kanjobal, Kashmiri, Cambodian, Klingon, Korean, Krio, Kurdish, Lakota, Laotian, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luganda, Luxenbourgeois, Macedonian, Malay, Malagasy, Maltese, Mandarin, Mandinka, Mankon, Marathi, Mien, Malayalam, Mongolian, Navajo, Neapolitan, Nepali, Norwegian, NGR Pidgin Eng, Nuer, Oromo, Pampangan, Pangasinan, Papiamento, Pashto, Pidgin English,

Portuguese, Portuguese Creole, Punjabi, Rhade, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Sango, Serbian, Shanghai, Sicilian, Sinhalese, Sindhi, Slovak, Slovenian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Szechuan, Tagalog, Taiwanese, Tamil, Tigre, Thai, Tibetan, Tigrigna, Toishanese, Tongan, Toucouleur, Tshiluba, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Visayan, Wolof, Yiddish, Yoruba, Yupik.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

To ensure premium interpretation in the consecutive mode, all interpreters are tested and accredited by Language Line Services' staff raters to provide our customers with the most accurate and professional over-the-phone interpretation service in the industry.

Resumes are received from a wide variety of sources from all over the country. Language Line Services has representation at every major professional interpretation convention in the country, including the annual conferences of NAJIT (National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators), ATA (American Translators' Association), and ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages). We closely monitor any interpreter training developments nationwide and keep a database of schools, organizations, websites, and agencies for recruiting purposes. We initiate and maintain relationships with those recruiting sources that have proven to be productive. We do extensive internet research on language-related sites and frequently recruit on the internet. Furthermore, we give presentations and workshops on the merits of over-the-phone interpretation at those interpretation training programs that have produced the highest quality candidates in the past. We have also provided annual scholarships to those same programs;

We have an extensive referral program with our staff interpreters and we advertise in major newspapers and in publications targeted towards certain ethnic groups or language professionals.

Language Line Services utilizes an internally developed interpreter selection process:

All potential interpreter resumes are screened for interpretation training and/or experience, general education and related work experience by recruiters with extensive interpretation experience. The candidates then attend an information session on the terms and requirements of performing over-the-phone interpretation for Language Line Services.

The next step is that the candidates are given an assessment exercise by a recruiter, for both the candidate and the recruiter to assess the basic interpretation skills of the candidate. The recruiter then interviews the candidate in detail regarding the interpretation experience and training and other interpretation-related experiences listed or not listed on the candidate's resume.

At this point, if the recruiter determines that the candidate has the skills required, the candidate takes an Interpreter Skills Assessment (ISA). The ISA is a criterion-referenced integrative test given in a realistic setting. The ISA is designed to test bi-directional, consecutive interpretation skills. The assessment consists of role-play situations that are illustrative of the type of situations an interpreter may be asked to interpret. Each candidate interprets two role plays, totaling

approximately 30 minutes of interpretation. The following criteria is used to evaluate performance:

- a) Accuracy, i.e., preserving the meaning without omitting or adding any information, nor summarizing or editorializing;
- b) Grammatical correctness;
- c) Knowledge of terminology;
- d) Interpretation style, i.e., enunciation, intonation, stress, pronunciation, and professional demeanor;
- e) Ability to follow instructions;
- f) Listening and retention skills.

In general, Language Line Services hires less than 10 percent of interpreter applicants.

As regards level of formal education, about 25 percent of LLS interpreters have some college education, 70 percent have a college degree and 30 percent have an advanced degree.

Training:

72 hours of training is required, conducted by LLS either over the phone with an instructor or on-site during the annual Interpreter Regional Conferences. For more information about the training process, please call Danyune Geertsen at 831-648-5819, or e-mail at danyune@languageline.com

Practicum: A practicum is required during the first month.

Continuing Education: 10 hours of continuing education per year is required.

Certification: About 34 percent of interpreters are certified by an internal process. There are 559 currently active interpreters who have received the internal Medical Interpreting Certification, which represents the majority of interpreters who take medical calls. Because of our stratification, only a selected group of interpreters takes medical calls. Currently, 92 percent of medical calls are handled by certified interpreters. The rest of the calls are handled by interpreters who have received medical interpreting training but are still in the process of certification. About 2.7 percent of interpreters are certified by the State of California, about 1.2 percent certified for Federal Court, and about 2.4 percent are certified by the State Court Consortium. About 55 percent of LLS's translators are ATA accredited.

Quality assurance, long term: LLS has a department dedicated to managing our quality monitoring process, the Quality Assurance Department. A group of Senior Language Specialists (SLS) are trained to conduct quality monitoring and provide constructive feedback. A Senior Language Specialist works with a team of 15-30 interpreters and all SLSes are selected for their top-notch language and interpretation skills and are trained to provide in-language observation and feedback. An interpreter's length of service and level of performance determine how often he or she will be monitored. New interpreters who have been with the company for less than a year and interpreters with observation ratings that indicate a need for improvement are monitored more often. Interpreters

with more experience and who have good or outstanding performance ratings are monitored less frequently.

The monitoring process is transparent to the interpreter— i.e., interpreters are not aware when they are being monitored. Through internally developed software, an observation bridge is set up from the main office, and calls are connected to the SLSes. At the end of the observation, the Senior Language Specialist will call the interpreter to provide feedback.

LLS uses two forms to track monitoring results: A Service Observation Rating Form and a Service Observation Summary Form. The first is used to rate each call monitored and evaluate how the interpreter handled the call compared against the standards; the second is used to highlight the performance of the interpreter for coaching purposes.

Monitoring information is entered and tracked in an internally developed database. The Quality Assurance Manager reviews the data and identifies any trends for training purposes. The Manager also conducts monthly meetings with the Senior Language Specialists to enforce consistency and gather information on any major performance issues identified through observation.

A copy of each observation is then forwarded to the Interpreter's manager in the Operations Department. If performance improvement areas are identified by the Senior Language Specialists, recommendations will be made on the Service Observation Summary Forms. The Senior Language Specialists also use an Interpreter Performance Development Plan (IPDP) for coaching and follow-up. The IPDP is forwarded to the manager, who can then determine any additional developmental or disciplinary actions.

Additionally, the Interpreter Training Department works closely with the Quality Assurance Department in identifying training needs and developing training programs. Many Senior Language Specialists are also trainers, who can train the interpreters on their teams. Observation information is also frequently taken into consideration in interpreter communications, e.g., the monthly interpreter newsletter covers issues and challenges identified through monitoring.

Administration

Administrative policies:

Hours of operation: 24 hours a day, daily.

Complaint policy: Language Line Services has a Voice of the Customer (VOC) program. All customer feedback is recorded and tracked for interpreter coaching and training purposes. The interpreter's supervisor investigates each complaint and responds to the customer within 48 hours if a call-back is requested. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the supervisor may provide coaching to the interpreter or take disciplinary actions.

Pricing:

Call 800-752-0093 for information on pricing, as the caller may be eligible for a discount. There is a language differential of \$0.10 - \$0.40 per minute. There is an account set-up fee of \$50 that may be waived.

Billing: Monthly, net 30, late fees of 1.5 percent of balance are assessed. Billing info is customized based on customer request, it could include but not limited to: language, call length, customer end-user info (such as name, department, cost code, employee ID), LLS interpreter ID, ANI, and connect time of each call.

For telephonic providers: Limited test calls prior to contract are allowed.

Connect times: LLS average connect time is 40 seconds. Connect time is from the time the customer places a call to LLS to the time an interpreter is on the line starting to interpret. It has two components: 1) data collection time, and 2) connecting to an interpreter of requested language. Customer has the option to streamline data collection, which can shorten the connect time to zero.

Disaster Recovery Process: Language Line Service has achieved full redundancy, and its data and call processing system is located in two centers, each capable of handling 100 percent of the call volume.

Additional Comments

While the company offers extensive interpreter training programs on accuracy, Interpreter Code of Ethics including confidentiality, interpreting skills and industry-specific knowledge, Language Line has purchased a significant liability insurance coverage on errors and omissions.

Language Line Services has been involved in the efforts of standard setting in the country. For example, in working with the ASTM (American Society of Testing and Material), LLS sponsored and contributed to the writing of the Standard Guide for Language Interpretation Services. LLS has also participated in the efforts of the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC) towards setting standards in the health care setting.

Language Line Services is the first, and so far the only known, over-the-phone interpreting provider to develop and implement a Medical Interpreting Certification Program, as a result of thorough research and through using a testing instrument that was validated by external experts in the field. In addition to testing, the Certification Program also incorporates training and performance review to ensure the highest level of competency of its certified interpreters. This process is the first of its kind and patent-pending.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

Pacific Interpreters

Contact Information

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Agency Services

- Types of services:** In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services, translation services, Cultural Competency and Diversity training services, provider training on language access application and utilization, Ethnic Minorities Profiles: printed materials & presentations.
- Service area:** In-person interpreting services: Oregon and Washington State
Telephonic interpreting services: U.S., Canada and worldwide
Translation services: U.S., Canada and worldwide
Other services: U.S. and Canada
- Industries served:** Health care, social service, legal, commercial, insurance, hotels, public service.
- Languages provided':** Pacific Interpreters provides over 140 languages. We will actively seek interpreters for languages currently not on our list upon customer request.

Quality Assurance

- Interpreter screening:** Interpreter screening is accomplished as follows:
1. Over-the-phone pre-screening interview in English to assess the following:
 - Prior professional/volunteer interpreting/translating experience
 - Interpreting/Translating industry related Education/Certification
 - English Comprehension Skills
 - Customer Service Skills
 - Ethics
 2. Over-the-phone non-English Language Proficiency Test to assess:
 - Overall proficiency and fluency
 - Diction and pronunciation
 - Knowledge and understanding of industry specific terminology (medical, financial and commercial)
 - Ability to interpret accurately and completely

During the screening process, the following skills are assessed: basic language skills, industry-specific terminology, ethics, integrated interpreting skills, sight translation (for in-person interpreters only), written translation skills (for translators only). As regards formal education, about 70 percent of the interpreter/translator base has at least some college education; about 65 percent has a college degree and about 10 percent has an advanced degree.

Training:

All interpreters are required to take a 2-hour “Introduction to Professional Interpreting Standards, Protocols and Ethics” training session. On site interpreters are required to take Bridging the Gap Medical Interpreter Training Program (40 hours) within the first year of working for PI.

Telephonic interpreters are required to take PI’s Telephone Interpreter Training Program (10 hours) within the first year of working for PI

For more information on the training programs, contact Tatyana Davis at the PI Interpreter Training Department, (tel) 800 311-1236, ext. 5610, (fax) (801) 881-2565, E-mail: Tatyana.Davis@pacificinterpreters.com

Practicum: A short practicum is required: 2-3 calls within two weeks.

Continuing Education: 10-40 hours of continuing education is required each year.

Certification:

100 percent of interpreters are certified by internal process, 2.1 percent by the State of California, 5 percent by Federal Court, 14 percent by the Washington State DSHS. 45 percent of Sign Language interpreters are certified by RID and 16 percent by NAD. 54 percent of translators are certified by the ATA.

Quality assurance, long term: Quality assurance is done in the following ways:

- Yearly performance reviews for all on-site interpreters
- Customer Feedback Collection set up for all on-site interpreter service users
- 5 percent - 10 percent of all telephone interpretations monitored daily
- Individual telephone interpreter monitoring (10 percent of all calls taken)

Administration

Administrative policies:

Hours of operation: 24 hours a day, daily.

Confirmation policy²: An interpreter will always be provided. However, in the rare event a language cannot be provided, notice will be given within 48 hours after receiving the request. Over-the-phone interpreting may be offered.

Cancellation policy³: 4 hours

Complaint policy: Customer issues are directed to the Customer Relations Manager. Acknowledgement of an issue is made within 24 hours and resolution is within 48 hours.

Pricing: In-person interpreting: \$45 per hour
Telephonic interpreting: \$1.95 per hour,
Translation services: Varies by project and language.
No language differential.
No account set-up fee.

Billing: Monthly, net 30, late fees of 1.5 percent of balance are assessed. The standard information on a bill includes date, time of call, connection time, duration and language. We have the advanced capability to collect and provide up to five fields of alphanumeric information based upon the customer's request.

For telephonic providers: Limited test calls prior to contract are allowed.
Average connect times: 25 seconds – measured from the moment the call enters our phone switch to the moment the interpreter is on the line.
Disaster Recovery Process: all systems redundant

Additional Comments

Volume discounts are available.

Pacific Interpreters is a pioneer in providing language access to refugee groups and ethnic minorities nationwide. We are well known in medical community for being able to provide telephone interpretation services for hard-to-find languages, various African dialects from Acholi to Mandinka, as well as for putting a lot of effort in advancing culturally competent health care in the U.S.

Pacific Interpreters actively participates in promoting medical interpreter profession through support of the NCIHC, MMIA, ATA, SOMI and a number of other organizations that work on developing performance standards and general awareness in the area of language access and cultural diversity.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

²Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?

³Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?

Tele-Interpreters®

Contact Information

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Glendale, California 91203, U.S.A.
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E-mail: YKorman@TeleInterpreters.com

Agency Services

Types of services: In-person interpreting services, telephonic interpreting services, translation services, cultural awareness seminars, bilingual operator evaluations and QA, multilingual voice-over.

Service area: In-person interpreting services: worldwide
Telephonic interpreting services: worldwide
Translation services: worldwide

Industries served: Health care, social service, legal, commercial, conference, insurance, Help Desks, Call Centers, Credit Cards, Police & 911, E-Commerce, Import/Export, Public Utilities, Travel Industry, Legal & Judicial, U.S. Government, Airline Companies, Personal Business, State/City Agencies, Telecommunications, Financial Institutions, International Business

Languages provided!: Tele-Interpreters provides interpreting services for more than 150 languages. These languages include, Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Russian, Portuguese, Arabic, Japanese, Farsi, Italian, French, German, Tagalog and Armenian.

Quality Assurance

Interpreter screening:

Tele-Interpreters Interpreter Development Division has a screening protocol that filters and selects the best language professionals in the industry. During the screening process, the following skills are evaluated: basic language skills, industry-specific terminology, ethics, written translation, cultural awareness, integrated interpreting skills, sight translation.

Training:

Our interpreters are certified by recognized language organizations and/or interpreting schools and institutions. For more information on Tele-Interpreter's training program, Contact Tele-Interpreters by e-mail CS@TeleInterpreters.com or call Yeun Korman at 818-638-2547.

Practicum:

A practicum is required.

Continuing Education:

Continuing education is required.

Quality assurance, long term:

Tele-Interpreters QA Department vigorously monitors live and recorded calls.

Administration**Administrative policies:**

Hours of operation: 24 hours a day, daily.

Complaint policy: In a rare case where there is a complaint, Tele-Interpreters provides our clients with an e-mail address & toll-free number that is answered by a live customer service agent, 24/7. All service issues are addressed immediately and usually resolved within 24 hours.

Pricing:

For pricing information, please contact Yeun Korman at 818-638-2547 or YKorman@TeleInterpreters.com

Billing:

For billing information, Please contact Yeun Korman at 818-638-2547 or YKorman@TeleInterpreters.com

For telephonic providers: Limited test calls prior to contract are allowed.
Disaster Recovery Process: systems are redundant.

¹Languages for which the agency has at least one active interpreter currently and regularly available.

Sample Survey of Interpreter Service Agencies in the State of California

Agency Information

Name of agency

Address:

Contact person for potential clients

Name:

Position:

Telephone:

Fax:

Email:

Agency Services

Please place an 'X' next to each service that you provide

Face-to-face interpreting services:

Other (please specify)

Telephonic interpreting services:

Translation Services:

Please indicate the Geographic area that you serve

Face-to-face interpreting services

Telephonic interpreting services

Translation services

Other (please specify)

Please place an 'X' next to the Industries that you regularly serve

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conference | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legal | <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 500px; height: 20px;"></div> |

Please list the languages in which you provide services. (NOTE: please list only languages for which you have at least one active interpreter/translator currently and regularly available)

Quality Assurance

Initial screening

Please describe how potential interpreters/translators are screened.

Please place an 'X' next to the skills evaluated in your initial screening process:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> basic language skills | <input type="checkbox"/> cultural awareness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> industry-specific terminology | <input type="checkbox"/> integrated interpreting skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ethics | <input type="checkbox"/> sight translation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> written translation | |

Please indicate the percentage of your active interpreter/translator base that has the following levels of formal education.

with some college advanced degree college degree

Interpreter training

Are interpreters/translators required to have basic training in interpreting?

Yes No

If yes, how many hours are required? hours

Where are your interpreters/translators trained?

How could a client get more information about the training program?

Is a practicum required? (A practicum is defined as a time when a novice interpreter observes and is observed on the job by an experienced interpreter.)

Yes No

If yes, how long is the practicum? hours

Do you require continuing education?

Yes No

If yes, how many hours of CE do you require per year? hours

Certification

NOTE: 'certification' refers to a scientifically validated and reliable process to guarantee skills and abilities.

What percentage of your spoken language interpreters is certified by

% by internal process

% by the State of California

% Federal Court

% Other (please specify)

What percentage of your sign language interpreters is certified by

% certified by RID

% certified by NAD

What percentage of your translators is accredited by the ATA?

Monitoring:

How do you guarantee quality interpreting/translation services over time?

Administration

Administrative policies

Hours of operation? (eg, 24/7 or 9:00 – 5:00 weekdays only)

Confirmation policy (Within what time of receiving a request will you confirm that an interpreter has been found?)

Cancellation policy (Within how many hours of the appointment may the client cancel without being charged?)

Complaint policy (How are complaints handled?)

Will the agency allow limited test calls prior to contracting for telephonic interpreting?

Yes No Don't provide this service.

Pricing

What is your price range for face-to-face interpreting during business hours?

 Don't provide this service

What is your price range for face-to-face interpreting on nights and weekends?

 Don't provide this service

What is your price range telephonic interpreting during business hours?

 Don't provide this service

What is your price range for telephonic interpreting on nights and weekends?

 Don't provide this service

What is your price range for translation services?

 Don't provide this service

Is there a language differential?

No Yes; if so, how much?

Is there an account set-up fee?

No Yes, if so, how much?

Billing

How often do you bill?

What are the terms?

Do you assess late fees?

No Yes; if so, how much?

What information for tracking purposes can be provided on the bill?

For telephonic interpreter service providers only

What is your average connect time? (Include your definition of 'connect time.')

Are your telephonic services redundant? (i.e. if an emergency rendered your primary telephone service inoperative, are you prepared with a secondary service to guarantee access?)

Yes No

Additional comments from agency

www.calendow.org

How to Choose and Use a Language Agency

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