



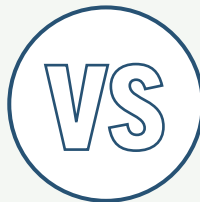
# Improving Language Justice Through Interpretation and Translation



This document provides guidance for interpretation and translation. The intent is to assist organizations serving communities with limited English proficiency in improving language justice and inclusivity.

## Certified Interpreter

Someone who is certified as competent by a professional organization or government entity through rigorous testing based on appropriate and consistent criteria.



## Qualified Interpreter

Someone who has been assessed for professional skills, demonstrates a high level of proficiency in at least two languages, and has the appropriate training and experience to interpret with skill and accuracy.

There are only two types of interpreters that require specific credentials: court interpreters and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. **No consistent credentials are required across all U.S. jurisdictions** for individuals providing interpretation and translation services in other settings. As such, it is recommended to verify required qualifications in your specific state.

**It is strongly recommended that those interpreting or translating clinical or medical information be certified nationally to avoid preventable medical errors and legal litigation.**

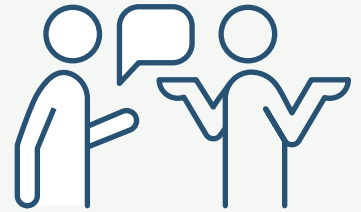
When certifications do not exist for a particular language, entities should use other criteria (such as a **PRAXIS** aptitude test) and their own judgment to “qualify” interpreters, otherwise this may lead to violations of the [Title VI Rights Act of 1964](#).

Under [Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act](#), a bilingual family member may **not** be used as an interpreter unless they are formally trained.



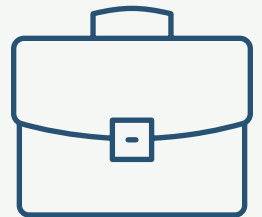
## General Interpretation and Translation Guidance

- Translate educational materials, resources, and handouts into priority populations' most commonly spoken languages. If possible, have native speakers review documents for cultural appropriateness and nuances.
- Use simple, easy-to-understand language when developing outreach materials. When materials are translated, the reading difficulty often increases by two or more reading levels.
- Avoid using idioms and jokes, as the meaning often changes through translation.
- Make every effort to advance language justice principles as a standard of practice in public health. Talk with staff about the importance of language access, advocate for accessible and easy-to-understand information, and document efforts for continuous improvement.
- Utilize [these tips](#) when working with an over-the-phone interpreter.
- Ensure staff maintains up to date knowledge of the most commonly spoken languages in their respective communities.



## Guidance for Language Justice Capacity Building in the Workforce

- Provide multiple, or a “pool” of, people who possess adequate skills in the most commonly spoken languages of the priority populations being served.
- Provide interpreters and translators with learning opportunities for language development and sustained proficiency. These opportunities help train and retain staff.
- Consider paying for certifications (listed on page two) for multilingual staff.
- Designate budget line items for hiring linguists through a language services provider.
- Make efforts to assess potential hires for language skills. If the hire does not pass the assessment, organizations should make their best efforts to provide training resources.
- Frequently survey language staff on practices and policies that best fit their and the communities needs, and involve them in decision-making processes.
- For more information on developing your program to further language justice, [see this guide for federally conducted and assisted programs](#).



## Language Justice Resources

Below are resources and links for further learning, legal information, exam information, and more. Click each title to visit the source.

### [Section 1557: Affordable Care Act | FAQ](#)

Information about the Affordable Care Act in regards to qualified medical interpretation.



### [FAQ: Translators and Interpreters](#)

Information about the differences in interpretation and translation.



## American Translators Association (ATA) Exam



The only national translation certification in the United States (neither government sponsored or mandated to practice).

## Language Testing International (LTI) Exam



Language proficiency tests available for various organizations, including government and academia.

## Language Justice Curriculum: A Resource for Interpreters



A continued education program for interpreters from the Center for Participatory Change.

## Language Justice Tool: Example from Colorado



Created by the Office of Health Equity at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, this document serves as guidance to advance language justice.

## The National Board Of Certification For Medical Interpreters (NBCMI)



Written and oral exams for those needing to be certified in medical interpretation.

**Strongly recommended if there is any clinical information or direct patient care.**

## Transcreation: Why Do We Need It?



Learn more about transcreation and why it's needed. This practice is not directly translated, but rather reflected in ways that resonates between languages and cultures.

## Resources

- <https://www.certifiedmedicalinterpreters.org/benefits-of-certification>
- <https://www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/federal-court-interpreters>
- <https://www.ncihc.org/faq-healthcare-professionals>
- <https://interpretersunlimited.com/section-1557-affordable-care-act-faq/>
- <https://www.intergroupresources.com/rc/Highlander%20curric.pdf>



For more information or questions, contact the Colorado Center of Excellence in Newcomer Health by email:

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