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Language Services Action Kit: Interpreter Services in Health Care Settings for People with Limited English Proficiency (NHeLP and The Access Project, August 2003, revised Feb. 2004)

The Access Project and the National Health Law Program have developed a Language Services Action Kit for advocates and others working to ensure that people with limited English proficiency in their state get appropriate language assistance services in medical settings.

As the number of people with limited English proficiency in the United States rises, the need for language services in health care settings also grows. Federal laws require health care providers to offer language services, such as interpretation and translation, but many say they do not have the funds to do so. However, providers and others are often unaware that federal funds are available to help states pay for language services for patients covered by Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

Federal funding for interpreter and other language services can benefit everyone: health care providers, state governments, and patients with limited English skills in need of services. This offers an unusual opportunity for these stakeholders and others to come together to advocate for reimbursement for language services in their state Medicaid and SCHIP programs. We hope the materials in this Action Kit will assist you in undertaking such an effort in your state.

The Action Kit includes materials that:

- Explain the federal laws and policies that require health care providers to ensure access to services for people with limited English proficiency;

- Explain how states pay for Medicaid and SCHIP services, and how they can get federal funding to help pay for language services, such as interpretation, for program enrollees;
- Describe models that some states have adopted to reimburse health care providers for language services; • Provide information and describe techniques you can use to demonstrate the need for language services in advocacy campaigns;
- List resources where you may find additional information about language services; and
- Suggest some next steps for getting your advocacy efforts started.

Please see the Table of Contents (below) to see if the kit will be appropriate for the work your organization is doing around the issue of language services in health care settings for LEP individuals.

LANGUAGE SERVICES ACTION KIT INTERPRETER SERVICES IN HEALTH CARE SETTINGS FOR PEOPLE WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Table of Contents

1. About the Language Services Action Kit
2. Federal Laws and Policies Requiring Access to Services in Health Care Settings for People with Limited English Proficiency a) Frequently Asked Questions - Federal Laws and Policies Ensuring Access to Language Services
3. Obtaining Federal Funding to Help States Pay for Language Services a) Frequently Asked Questions - Paying for Language Services for Medicaid and SCHIP Enrollees b) Medicaid and SCHIP Reimbursement Models for Language Services
4. Making the Case For Language Services a) The Growing Need for Language Services b) The Consequences of Not Providing Language Services: Some Facts and Personal Stories c) Why Relying on Family Members, Friends and Children as Interpreters is Dangerous and Should be Discouraged d) An Introduction to Story Banking e) Writing an Op-Ed Piece or a Letter to the Editor About the Need for Language Services

5. Some Next Steps in Advocating for Medicaid/SCHIP Reimbursement for Language Services
6. Resources
7. Acknowledgements.