

Students as Interpreters

Medical interpreting is a profession that requires training, experience, skills, knowledge of medical terminology, the Standards of Practice, and the Code of Ethics, as well as language fluency and proficiency in both English and the patient's language. The Department of Human Health Services states that "an individual that has above average familiarity with speaking or understanding a language other than English does not suffice to make that individual a qualified interpreter for an individual with limited English proficiency."

A qualified interpreter is required per federal standards and compliance with hospital policies. Students should not interpret for another person (third party), unless they meet the required interpreter qualifications. The same regulations apply to those that are hearing impaired. The only exception is if the medical situation is considered to be life threatening and no professional interpreters are available.

Furthermore, when a patient, family member or companion is deaf, non-English speaking or is Limited English Proficient (LEP), in order for bilingual/multilingual providers to communicate directly with said patient, family member or companion, in a language other than English, the provider must be assessed to determine their ability to communicate effectively in the target language. Students who wish to be assessed should contact the Office of Medical Education and Student Affairs to understand the responsibility and procedures related to doing this.

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