



Increasing Accessibility with Translation & Interpretation Services

TOOLKIT

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Acknowledgement

The Peer Recovery Center of Excellence (PR CoE) acknowledges the thousands of peer support workers dedicating their careers and services to improve the lives of those in recovery from substance use disorder (SUD). We hope this toolkit contributes to the essential peer support services you provide and helps to strengthen approaches to make services accessible to all communities.

Overview

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide peer support workers the information necessary to plan and implement translation and interpretation services within their services for clients with limited English proficiency (LEP). As reported by the [Census Bureau](#), individuals with LEP refers to people who speak English less than “very well” and may often speak another native language at home. The toolkit offers actionable steps, examples, checklists, tools, and resources derived from research publications and expert recommendations.

Why provide translation and interpretation services in peer support services?

Based on the recent [Census Bureau](#) data, nearly 25 million people in the U.S. are people with limited English proficiency (LEP). This number is projected to increase over the next several years, reflecting the growth of the nation’s diverse population.

According to [SAMHSA](#), in 2019, there were nearly 16,000 SUD facilities in the U.S., and over 9,000 of those facilities offer peer support services. An estimated number of 3 million adults receive SUD treatment in the U.S.

With the growing number of those with LEP, SUD and mental health facilities would benefit from providing extensive language services. Expanding language services increases inclusivity and care volume. The relationship between a peer support worker and a peer is the foundation to effective treatment and recovery support. To provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services to people with LEP, we outlined steps you can take to plan and implement translation and interpretation services.

What are translation services?

Translation services offer language support for written documents, the conversion of written information from one language to another. It is important to note that translation services also offer translation of written material to spoken or signed language. This is a form of oral interpretation known as sight translation.

What are interpretation services?

Interpretation services offer live communication support for spoken or signed languages, the verbal translation of one language to another. There are several types of services to consider, including the following: conveying information from a spoken language to a different spoken language, a spoken language to signed language, or a form of signed language to another form of signed language. Simultaneous and consecutive interpretations are two common forms with different benefits and values.

Simultaneous interpretation is when the interpreter directly renders information from one language to another immediately following a speaker from start to finish. The speaker does not pause their delivery for the interpreter.

Consecutive interpretation is when an interpreter communicates information in pieces as the speaker pauses periodically, every 40-60 words.

Please review the tables below. Examples of common language services can be found in Table 1. Table 2 provides more information and examples of interpretation services.

Table 1. Examples of Common Language Services

Form	Types of Service	Examples of Product/Service
Written	Translation services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Patient/Client information forms or questionnaires● Rights and responsibility forms● Notice of Language Assistance services● Consent documents● Clinical intake forms● Treatment progress documents● Waivers● Information flyers● Brochures● Evaluation tools or surveys
Verbal communication (spoken or signed)	Interpretation services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● In-person (face-to-face) interactions: appointments, interviews,● Telephonic (over-the-phone) interactions● Remote interpretation: live or recorded presentations, virtual meetings

Table 2. Examples of Interpretation Services

Method	Description and considerations
Agency Interpreters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On-demand interpreters managed by a language agency ● Access to several languages ● Your organization does not have oversight of the interpreter's performance
Bilingual Staff or Staff Interpreters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Full-time employees with greater availability ● Recruited based on the language needs of the people your organization serves ● On-sight availability with familiarity to your organization's service delivery
Contract Interpreters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Single interpreters can be contracted for short and/or temporary work ● May require scheduling in advance ● Cost may vary as demand fluctuates ● Background and training vary by interpreter ● Requires contracting/payment for service
Telephonic Interpretation (schedule and on-demand)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Often, service and interpreters are managed by a commercial service ● Access to several languages ● Remote work ● No direct oversight of performance ● Loss of nonverbal information ● Requires some equipment, possible failure of equipment

Informational Resources

Review the following videos to learn more about translation and interpretation services.

- [8+ Types of Interpreting Services EXPLAINED: Interpretation 101](#)
- [Finding the Right Interpreting Services](#)
- [Interpreter Breaks Down How Real-Time Translation Works](#)
- [Telephonic Interpretation Services](#)
- [What is Video Remote Interpreting?](#)

Recommended Strategies

To increase accessibility of peer support services in your organization, consider the following strategies when developing a language access plan.

Figure 1. Suggested strategies to include in a language access plan



Determine the type and level of language services for your organization

Before providing any language service, it is imperative to understand how people with LEP engage with your organization to determine the type of service appropriate for your organization. Identify what major language groups you serve, their preferred language, and when they require language support services.

For larger organizations, completing a language assessment analysis of staff and clients is recommended to organize priorities. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) has developed a [Readiness Assessment Survey](#) for large groups to complete.

In your search, consider including applicants and participants/peers who: engage in outreach and in-house programs, hotlines or informational calls, online platforms, and other public functions. After you identify the LEP communities, review public data to confirm linguistic characteristics.

Tools for Assessing your Community Linguistic Composition:

- [Language Access Plan Worksheet](#)
- [Civil Rights Division's Language Map App](#)
- [MLA Language Map](#)

Locate and Assess Linguistic Services

Once you assess the individuals with LEP who interact with your organization and identify their linguistic needs, it is time to locate and assess translation and interpretation services available in your area. Consider these factors as you complete your evaluation:

- Requirement and training
 - How does the agency recruit, screen, and train their interpreters?
 - Are the interpreters specialized or familiar with SUD or mental health?
- Availability
 - Does the agency provide the languages you need?
 - How responsive is the agency? Do they offer services 24/7?
 - Can they meet your organization's expectations (scope of work)?
 - For telephonic services, what is their average response time?
- Cost/Fees per service
- Equipment and documentation
- Cancellation policies and no-show rates
- Additional services offered
- Learn their history and reviews

When translating documents, make sure the material is provided in plain language, culturally appropriate, and easily accessible to clients or patients when needed.

There are several locator resources online to help you in your search, along with tips on evaluating language agencies.

More Resources:

- [Language Services Resource Guide for Health Care Providers](#)
- [Providing Language Services to Diverse Populations: Lessons from the Field](#)
- [Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters \(CCHI\)](#)
- [CCHI Healthcare Interpreter Registry](#)
- [National Council on Interpreting in Health Care](#)

Develop policies and procedures for staff

After gaining buy-in from the leadership in your organization, begin developing policies and procedures for staff. Identify who needs to be knowledgeable about the LEP plan. Be specific on how staff should engage with consultants/interpreters. Disseminate the plan to all staff and clients for awareness. Encourage staff to offer professional interpreters and not rely on the client's family or friends for interpretations.

For tips on working with interpreters, read [Do's and Don'ts: Guidelines for Clinicians Working with Interpreters in Mental Health Settings](#).

If your organization chooses to hire full-time employees as interpreters, ensure they receive appropriate training to understand ethical/legal standards. Provide material to educate them on the best practices for conducting interpretation services, including culturally appropriate communication and behavior.

In addition to staff preparation, level-set expectations with the language agencies you are planning to work with. We have included additional tools that can help you prepare.

Additional Tools:

- [Utilization of Language Services for Clients with Limited English Proficiency Protocols](#)
- [Best Practices for Communicating Through an Interpreter](#)
- [National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services \(CLAS\) in Health and Health Care](#)
- [Best Practices for Working with Interpreters](#)
- [Peer Support and Consultation Project for Interpreters: A Model for Supporting the Well-Being of Interpreters who Practice in Mental Health Settings](#)

Monitor and Evaluate Language Services

Organizations can collect and utilize data to ensure the effectiveness of translation and interpretation services. Evaluating external and/or internal interpreters is critical to the success of your language access plan. It is important to review their compliance, performance, and caseload.

Evaluation Tools:

- [AHRQ Supplemental Items for the CAHPS Hospital Survey: Interpreter Services](#)
- [Language Access Plan Worksheet](#)
- [Assessment and Evaluation Methods Used to Build and Assess Language Access Services in Social Services Agencies](#)
- [Implementing Monitoring Procedures: Implement Procedures for Monitoring and Evaluating Language Assistance Services](#)

Conclusion

Developing a language access plan to expand services to individuals with LEP is essential to meet the needs of all peers in recovery from substance use disorder. In addition to this toolkit, you can find various resources online with detailed recommendations and guidelines to implement interpretation and translation services in different settings.

If you have any questions, please contact the Peer Recovery Center of Excellence at info@peerrecoverynow.org. To learn more about the peer recovery center of excellence, visit our website at <https://peerrecoverynow.org/>.

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head, if you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”

- Nelson Mandela

About the Peer Recovery Center of Excellence

The **Peer Recovery Center of Excellence (CoE)** is housed at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC). Partners include the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, University of Texas-Austin, and University of Wisconsin-Madison, and our appointed peer led Steering Committee. Peer voice is at the core of our work and guides our mission to enhance the field of substance use peer support services.

The Peer Recovery CoE has four focus areas: Integration of Peers into Non-Traditional Settings, Recovery Community Organization Capacity Building, Peer Workforce Development, and Evidence-Based Practice & Practice-Based Evidence Dissemination. In addition to training and publications, the Peer Recovery CoE accepts technical assistance requests from any individual, organization, community, state or region in need of training relating to substance use disorder peer support services.

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Disclaimer Statement

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