




Tip Sheet for the Communication and Language Assistance Theme (Standards 5-8)

Objective: To enhance communication and language assistance within health care organizations, ensuring that services are accessible and effective for people of diverse linguistic backgrounds.

KEY ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION


Standard 5: Offer Language Assistance

- Implement free language services:** Provide free language assistance services, such as interpretation and translation, to people with limited English proficiency or other communication needs, to ensure timely access to all health services.
- Utilize qualified interpreters:** Employ or contract with qualified interpreters who are proficient in the languages spoken by the population served and are trained in medical terminology, including behavioral health terminology.

 **Example:** A pharmacy chain implements a system where pharmacists use tablet devices that can quickly connect to live interpreters, ensuring that clients receive accurate information about their medications.


Standard 6: Inform All Individuals of the Availability of Language Assistance Services

- Clear notification:** Clearly inform all clients of their right to receive language assistance services in their preferred language, both verbally and in writing.
- Visibility:** Post notices about the availability of language assistance services in highly visible areas and in languages commonly spoken by the populations served.

 **Example:** A mental health clinic places multilingual banners on its website and at its physical location, clearly informing visitors of their right to free language assistance services.

Standard 7: Ensure the Competence of Individuals Providing Language Assistance


- Competence over convenience:** Emphasize the use of competent language services over convenience options such as using untrained staff, friends or family members, especially minors, for interpretation.
- Training and evaluation:** Provide ongoing training for interpreters and translators on cultural and linguistic responsiveness, ethics and confidentiality. Regularly evaluate their performance to ensure high-quality communication assistance.

 **Example:** A behavioral health crisis unit employs a team of certified medical interpreters who receive ongoing training in mental health care to enhance their ability to support clients and their families.



Standard 8: Provide Easy-to-Understand Print and Multimedia Materials and Signage

- ❑ **Simplify communication:** Develop and distribute health materials, such as brochures, forms and educational materials, that are easy to understand and available in the languages commonly used by the populations in the service area.
- ❑ **Use of multimedia:** Leverage multimedia resources, including digital content, videos and visual aids, to improve understanding and engagement, and ensure that they are culturally and linguistically responsive.

 **Example:** A public health department develops a series of animated videos explaining preventive care options available in multiple languages and distributed across various digital platforms to increase community outreach.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

- ❑ **Assessment and planning:** Regularly assess the linguistic needs of populations served and plan language services accordingly.
- ❑ **Staff training:** Train all staff on how to access and effectively use language assistance services and the importance of cultural and linguistic responsiveness.
- ❑ **Quality monitoring:** Implement a system for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of language assistance services, including client feedback mechanisms.
- ❑ **Resource allocation:** Ensure that adequate resources, including budget and technology, are allocated to support comprehensive language assistance services.
- ❑ **Community engagement:** Engage with community organizations and linguistic experts to enhance language services and ensure that they meet the needs of the populations served.



Takeaway: Effective communication is crucial for quality health care delivery. By implementing these standards, health care organizations can ensure that all individuals receive the care they need in a manner that is both understandable and respectful of their linguistic and cultural needs.

