

Forum on Language and Disability Access

Best Practices for Providing Language Assistance Services

Date: Tuesday, May 15th, 2023 (1pm-3pm)

Q&A for questions received through the event registration to date.

Besides, the language line & TTY, what other services are offered to the public to assist with those who have disabilities? Or are there other programs being discussed for the future?

DMAS recognizes that there is not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to ensuring access to Medicaid program information and services for individuals with disabilities. DMAS' website includes information on how to obtain auxiliary aids or other accommodations. All written notices also include that contact information. Additionally, DMAS' website is compliant with disability access provisions. DMAS is committed to assisting everyone obtain information in a way that they can understand it. We will incorporate more information on disability access in future forum events.

What is DMAS doing towards adding more bilingual staff? Is DMAS aware that using an interpreter significantly contributes to errors that delays the process and causes incorrect denials?

DMAS is aware that in some situations communicating through a bilingual person offers a better customer experience. Currently DMAS has seven English/Spanish bilingual staff that use their language skills to communicate directly with Spanish-speaking individuals. These bilingual staff have passed a language skill competency assessment and are able to perform interpreting and translating functions at DMAS as well, according to their skill level. However, for high level interactions such as appeals hearings, DMAS uses qualified interpreters through our interpreting service vendor. The seven bilingual staff positions are within the outreach unit, appeals customer service/intake unit, civil rights unit and DMAS program integrity division. DMAS is very grateful to have these positions and looks into hiring more bilingual staff according to the business needs.

Are providers reimbursed for interpreter services?

Currently VA Medicaid does not reimburse providers for language services rendered to members in our fee-for-service population. However, providers who treat patients that are enrolled in a Virginia Medicaid Managed Care Organization (MCO), which are the overwhelming majority our population, can request language services through the member's MCO. All Virginia Medicaid MCOs have procedures in place to provide language services to Medicaid providers and members at no cost.

Has VDDHH been mentioned in language access plans as a resource for information on communication access for people with hearing loss?

DMAS currently contracts certified sign language interpreters through the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) service agreement. This is a new procedure we have implemented since September 2022. DMAS' language access internal procedures and DMAS Language Access Guidance for providers already mention this resource. Our publicly available version of the Language and Disability Access plan will include this information effective Summer of 2023 as part of our plan's annual revision procedures.

Are you familiar with Deaf Culture Digital Library? How much do you know about this one? 2. How do we raise awareness for 90% of parents who won't learn sign language to communicate with deaf children?

DMAS appreciates the referral to this reference and will review it to determine if there are any additional resources that can be used in our effort to continuously improve language and disability access.