

# Health Care Interpreters Certification Program

## Overview



Oregon  
**Health**  
Authority

# Outline

- ❖ Introduction to the Program
- ❖ Need for Health Care Interpreter Certification
- ❖ Program History
- ❖ Registration, Qualification, and Certification



# What is the Oregon Health Care Interpreters Certification Program?

- The Oregon Health Care Interpreters Certification Program is the state entity charged with implementing health care interpreter certification in Oregon.

# Health Care Interpreting

- Health care interpreting is defined as “interpreting that takes place in health care settings of any sort, including doctor’s offices, clinics, hospitals, home health visits, mental health clinics, and public health presentations. Typically the setting is an interview between a health care provider (doctor, nurse, lab technician) and a patient (or the patient and one or more family members).”

Source: National Council on Interpreting in Health Care

# The Need for Health Care Interpreter Certification

- Trained, certified interpreters facilitate timely and accurate communication between patients and providers, which improves health outcomes and prevents errors.



# Case Studies

- In a Florida emergency room, personnel misunderstood *intoxicado* (Spanish for poisoned, nauseous) and began treating an unconscious man for a drug overdose.
- Forty-eight hours later, when he had not improved, medical staff realized he was, in fact, suffering from a brain aneurysm.
- By this time, brain damage had left him a quadriplegic. The resultant lawsuit awarded \$71 million in damages to the man.

Source: New York Times

## Case Studies, cont'd

- A woman told a hospital resident that her daughter had 'hit herself' falling from her bike.
- The resident, misunderstanding, took this as evidence of abuse and contacted Social Services.
- The agency then sent a case worker, also without an interpreter, who required the woman to sign away custody of her children.

Source: New England Journal of Medicine

## Case Studies, cont'd

- In another instance, an interpreter misinterpreted a provider's instructions, leading a mother to put oral antibiotics in her daughter's ear instead of her mouth.

Source: Forbes

# Language as a Barrier to Care

- It is well documented that limited English (LEP) proficiency patients:
  - ✓ Have difficulty accessing care;
  - ✓ Receive fewer preventive services;
  - ✓ Are less likely to understand and follow medication directions;
  - ✓ Have poorer health outcomes; and
  - ✓ LEP children with asthma are more likely to be intubated.
- Certified interpreters play a vital role in helping LEP patients access the care they need.

Source: New England Journal of Medicine

# Professional vs. *Ad hoc* Interpreters

- *Ad hoc* interpreters include family members, nurses, social workers and others without interpreter training or certification.
- Use of *ad hoc* interpreters compromises confidentiality, leads to mistakes, and is ethically troublesome. In many cases, patients with family members acting as interpreters omit essential information due to embarrassment.

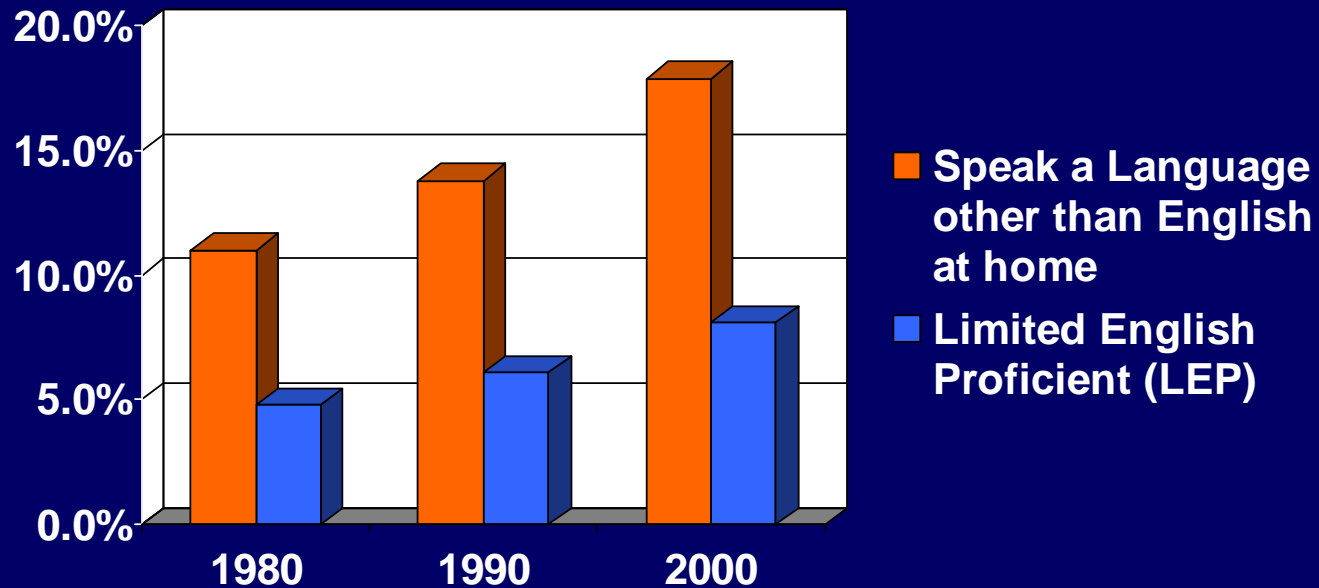
# Professional vs. *Ad hoc* Interpreters

- A study published in the journal "Pediatrics" found that trained, professional interpreters made fewer mistakes. The mistakes they did make were significantly less likely to have potential clinical consequences than those made by *ad hoc* interpreters.
- Certification assures a standard of quality for interpretation in health care settings.

Source: Pediatrics

# National Demographics

Percentages of Americans who Speak a Language Other Than English at Home or are LEP

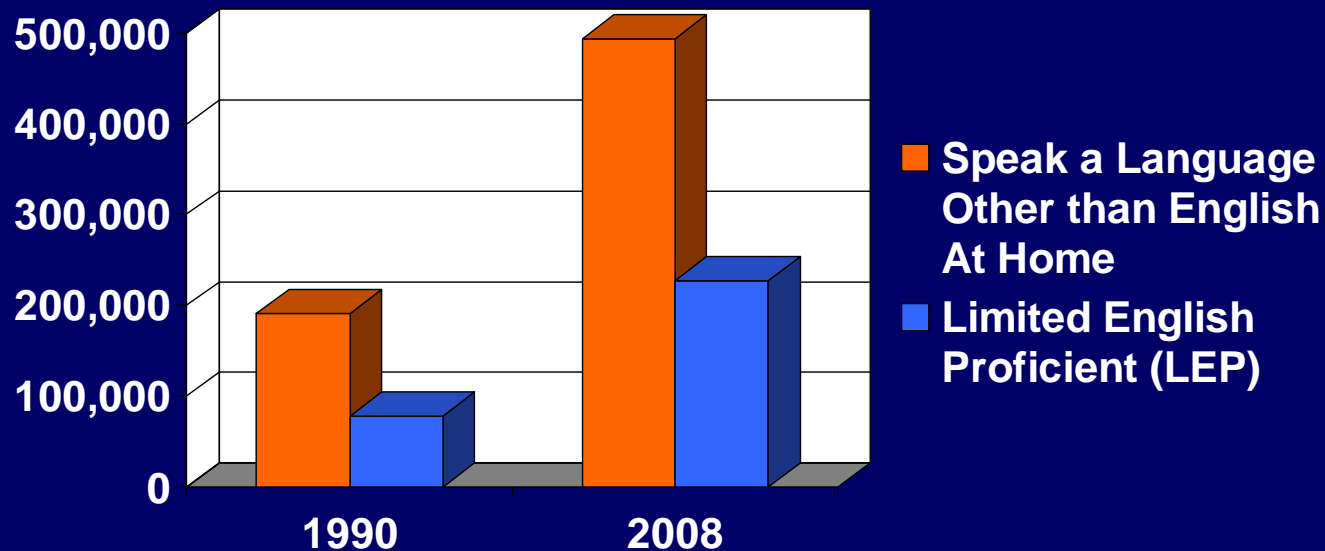


- On a national level, the United States is becoming increasingly linguistically diverse.

Source: New England Journal of Medicine

# Oregon's Changing Demographics

## Oregon Residents who Speak a Language Other Than English at Home or are LEP



- Oregon's LEP population has nearly tripled since 1990!

Source: US Census Bureau

# Program History

- Oregon's health care interpreter law is based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which stipulates that no person may be



excluded from participation in any program or activity receiving federal funds on the basis of national origin.

# President Clinton's Executive Order

- **2000** – President Clinton issues an executive order requiring that all federal agencies provide language assistance to persons of limited English proficiency (LEP).
- This provides the impetus for many states to implement their own laws providing interpreters to LEP persons.

# The Law

- **2001** – The Oregon Legislature passes a law declaring the lack of coordinated, sanctioned health care interpreting to be a public health emergency and appropriating \$50,000 for program implementation.
- **2002 to 2006** – The Oregon Council on Health Care Interpreters develops Administrative Rules (OAR) for program implementation.
- **2010** – The Oregon Council on Health Care Interpreters reconvenes to amend the Oregon Administrative Rules.

# The Law

- **March 2011** – Oregon Administrative Rules 333-002-000 are signed into law.
- **Present** – The Health Care Interpreters Certification Program is currently working to implement the OAR.

# How will the program be implemented?

By law implementation is divided into three phases:

- I. Registration
- II. Qualification
- III. Certification



# I. Registration

- Registration aims to create a central database of individuals currently or previously providing health care interpreting services in the state.
- The registry will be searchable by potential employers seeking language services.
- Registration is already available from our website. Register today!

# Registration Requirements

- At least 18 years old.
- High school diploma or GED.
- Fluent in English.
- Able to interpret or translate a dialect, slang and vocabulary of a non-English language.
- Completion of a short orientation online or by mail.
- \$25 enrollment fee.

## II. Qualification

- The title "qualified health care interpreter" will be awarded by passing language proficiency examinations in English and a second language and attending a training program.
- Qualification examinations are available! For a list of testing centers, visit our website.

# Requirements for Qualification

- Meet requirements for registration.
- Fluent in English and in one of the six other languages.
- Have at least 60 hours of formal health care interpreter training in a classroom setting.
- Have at least 40 hours of experience.
- Pass the qualification skill evaluation (language proficiency exam).
- \$25 application fee.

## III. Certification

- Certification is the highest level of health care interpreting accreditation to be offered by the state.
- An implementation date is still to be determined.

# Requirements for Certification

- Meet requirements for registration.
- Be a documented Oregon qualified HCI.
- Be fluent in English and another of six languages to be certified.
- Have at least 60 hours of formal health care interpreter training in a classroom setting.
- Have at least 80 hours of work experience as a health care interpreter.
- Pass an approved national certification test.

# Which languages will be qualified and certified?

- Cantonese
- Korean
- Mandarin
- Russian
- Spanish
- Vietnamese



- Other languages may be added at a later date.

# Get Registered!

- Go to the Health Care Interpreters Certification Program website, [www.oregon.gov/OHA/omhs/intrprtr/index.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/OHA/omhs/intrprtr/index.shtml), and complete the online registration...
- ...or call 971-673-1286 to request a registration packet be mailed to you.

- For more information, contact the Health Care Interpreters Certification Program:

David Cardona, Program Director

Office of Multicultural Health and Services

(971) 673-1286

Health Care Interpreters Certification Program website:

[www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/omh/intrprtr/index.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/omh/intrprtr/index.shtml)

# References

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