

## **Adoption of Final Oregon Administrative Rules for the OHA Health Care Interpreter (HCI) Program – Effective November 1, 2025**

### **Background:**

OHA HCI program held a rules advisory committee in July of 2025 to make updates to the rules developed in 2021-2022. These rules strengthen interpreter quality standards and workforce professionalization. The proposed rules underwent extensive community engagement through the Rules Advisory Committee process, public comment period, and a public hearing. Most proposed changes received broad support and will be adopted as written.

One provision requiring credentialed interpreters reside in the United States to be included in the Oregon HCI registry generated significant attention. The Agency received approximately 300 public comments about this provision, 80% of which were in favor of the change. Comments opposing the proposed change raised concerns about interpreter availability and health equity, particularly for:

- Rare and Indigenous languages (including Mam, K'iche', and other Mesoamerican languages)
- Rural and remote communities
- Populations already experiencing health disparities

To finalize the decision on whether to include this provision, OHA took the following into consideration:

### **950-050-0160 Health Care Provider Requirements includes exceptions to the rule.**

*Exceptions are allowed when the provider: Has made a good faith effort to obtain a health care interpreter from the central registry and has found that none are available to provide interpreting. In this circumstance, the health care provider may work with the non-registered interpreter for that visit or episode of care.*

- This exception is designed to ensure health care is not delayed due to lack of interpreter availability.
- “Nothing in these rules is meant to delay care in an emergency” (950-050-0000)

### **Potential Benefits:**

- Ensures interpreters understand U.S. healthcare systems, legal frameworks, and cultural contexts.
- Strengthens accountability and program integrity through U.S. jurisdiction.

- Supports development of Oregon's local interpreter workforce per ORS 413.558(8)(a) - Procedures for testing, qualifications and certification of health care interpreters; rules; penalties.
- Facilitates reliable communication and service of legal notices for regulatory purposes.
- Supports wages of U.S.-based interpreters.

Another provision that drew some concern was the proposed work hour requirement for first time applicants whose training was completed between one and four years prior to applying to the registry. Proposed language required that first time applicants demonstrate they had been working at least 20 hours per week (or 10 hours for languages of lesser diffusion) since having completed the training. To simplify the process, the Agency removed the specified minimum work hours requirement. The revised language now states: "...with a certificate of completion dated more than one year, but no more than two years, prior to the date of the written HCI central registry application, along with documentation that shows the applicant has been performing HCI work since completing the training. If the training was completed more than two years prior to the application date, the applicant must retake the full 60-hour training before applying."

#### **OHA Decision:**

OHA's Equity and Inclusion Division will adopt final HCI rules (scheduled for publication in the November 1, 2025, Administrative Bulletin) including:

1. **The requirement to reside in the U.S.:** Individuals seeking Oregon HCI credentials must reside in the United States.
2. **Outdated Training:** First time applicants with training more than one year old but not more than two years, must provide documentation they have been working in the field. First time applicants whose training is more than two years old must retake the 60-hour training.
3. **Training Program Requirement:** Approved OHA HCI training programs must be physically based and operate in the United States.
4. **Application Safeguards:** Applications must be submitted directly by individuals (not third parties) and requirements apply at both initial application and renewal.