

Oregon Health Care Interpreter Program Changes

In 2021, the Oregon legislature changed the requirements for health care interpreting services in Oregon, by passing [HB 2359](#). The new law:

- ▶ Makes it mandatory that health care providers who are reimbursed with public funds work with a qualified or certified health care interpreter (HCI) who is listed on the central registry. The law allows some exceptions for working with an HCI not listed on the central registry when:
 - The health care provider is proficient in the preferred language of the person with limited English proficiency,
 - The person with limited English proficiency has an interpreter they prefer to work with who is not on the central registry, or
 - The health care provider tried to find an interpreter using the central registry, but no interpreters were available.
- ▶ Outlines the recordkeeping requirements for health care providers and for interpreting service companies when they work with an HCI. These requirements include documenting the full name of the interpreter, the central registry number (if applicable), and the language that was interpreted.
- ▶ Requires that health care providers supply appropriate personal protective equipment at no cost to the HCI for onsite interpreting services.
- ▶ Directs the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to develop policies and processes to improve:
 - The quality, consistency, availability, and affordability of HCI training,
 - HCI qualification and certification standards, and
 - Accuracy and usability of the central registry.
- ▶ Directs OHA, as well as the state boards that license and certify health care professionals, to develop rules to enforce these new requirements for health care interpreting services.

Accordingly, OHA has updated its rules to reflect the new law. These final rules went into effect on July 1, 2022 and may be accessed here: [OAR 950-050](#).

In addition, working closely with the Oregon Council on Health Care Interpreters, the Oregon Department of Justice, health systems, and other community partners, OHA has identified further changes to reduce costs associated with being on the central registry and minimize administrative burdens associated with health care interpreting services. These changes are intended to increase the numbers of qualified and certified HCIs on the central registry and include:

- ▶ Removing all central registry application and renewal fees,
- ▶ Making arrangements for free or low cost HCI training,
- ▶ Updating training and experience requirements to maintain and improve HCI quality standards,
- ▶ Changing the requirement to move from qualified to certified HCI status from mandatory to optional and leaving that decision to the HCIs themselves,
- ▶ Giving health care providers and interpreting service companies time to transition to the new requirements for working with HCIs from the central registry when interpreting remotely, and
- ▶ Removing the requirement that HCIs pass a background check in order to be included as a qualified or certified HCI on the central registry.