

FAQs...

Frequently Asked Questions for Healthcare Providers

Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters



**Effective communication
is crucial to quality care...**

**Healthcare interpreters
are a critical part of the
equation**

What role do healthcare interpreters play on a medical team?

Professional healthcare interpreters provide the assurance of safety, quality, accuracy, and confidentiality required in a healthcare setting. When it comes to facilitating communication in a clinical encounter between parties that don't speak the same language, there is a large difference between family members, friends or untrained bilingual staff and professional healthcare interpreters. Certified healthcare interpreters understand medical terminology in both languages and employ professional techniques to handle the complexities that arise with patients, families, and healthcare providers.

In the healthcare system, where complex medical terminology leaves many English speakers confused or misinformed, language barriers not only increase miscommunication, but open the door to misdiagnoses, non-compliance and unnecessary or redundant medical tests, all leading to a lesser quality of care and contributing to racial and ethnic health disparities. More than 25 million people speak English less than very well in the U.S. and may be considered limited English proficient (LEP). Competent healthcare interpreters are essential to effective communication that ensures the provision of safe and high-quality care to racial and ethnic minorities, and are critical in the effort to reduce health disparities. Yet many LEP patients are not provided with competent interpreters and rely on family members, friends, and untrained bilingual staff.

Why is it critical to use CCHI-certified healthcare interpreters for every medical encounter?

The healthcare interpreting profession has changed dramatically over the years. Heightened public awareness, demographic shifts, technology, national standards, new regulations, and financial pressure have affected the way healthcare providers ensure language access for their patients. Add to that The Joint Commission standards requiring that providers ensure and document that those providing interpreting services are competent to do so, and this growing trend for accountability has created an insistence on certifying the skills and knowledge of prospective and current healthcare interpreters.

Further, there is a misconception that anyone who is bilingual can function as an interpreter. The profession, however, requires not only language proficiency but also specialized knowledge of healthcare and medical terminology in both the English and non-English languages, strict adherence to the Interpreter's Code of Ethics (which includes confidentiality procedures), accuracy, and an understanding of cultural competency practices. Increasingly hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare entities will need interpreters who can demonstrate that they have the skills, knowledge and abilities to perform competently.

New accreditation standards for hospitals from The Joint Commission require that hospitals define staff qualifications specific to job responsibilities. In explaining the new standards, The Joint Commission states *"in addition to language proficiency, individuals used to interpret or translate also must possess a set of skills and follow professional practice standards and a code of ethics."*

How will national certification ensure the competency of healthcare interpreters?

There is a growing trend for accountability of the competency of healthcare interpreters. This has created an insistence on certifying the skills and knowledge of prospective and current healthcare interpreters. It is in response to this progression that CCHI has developed and operates a national certification program for healthcare interpreters to provide an assurance of competency.



How will national certification for healthcare interpreters benefit senior healthcare executives?

National certification can help fulfill Standards and Elements of Performance for Quality Assurance and Professional Practices, critical for industry accreditation and/or Magnet designation.

It is just smart business. Relying on untrained interpreters risks:

- Federal funding
- The Joint Commission accreditation
- Office for Civil Rights investigation
- Patient compliance, safety, and outcomes

How will national certification for healthcare interpreters benefit clinicians?

Effective communication between patients and healthcare providers is essential to ensure accurate diagnosis and treatment, obtain informed consent and prevent medical errors. CCHI's certification credentialing for healthcare interpreters assures that interpreters meet specific demonstrable skills to ensure effective communication between patients and healthcare staff. Patients are able to focus on their healthcare concerns rather than communication concerns. It is just smart medicine to get the whole story, the first time.

With the implementation of certification, healthcare providers will see improved patient outcomes and better patient satisfaction because providers will have a clearer sense of a credentialed interpreter's knowledge, skills and abilities on the job and understand the problems that arise from relying on family members, friends, and untrained interpreters who are prone to mistakes and omissions. CCHI's certification program ensures quality as well as limits providers' legal liability. It also guarantees consistency across healthcare providers and systems that until recently have had to develop their own methods of assessing interpreters' competency and skills. It's just smart management.

A certified healthcare interpreter improves:

- Diagnostic Time
- Quality of Care
- Patient Outcome
- Professional Reputation
- Safeguarding of Medical License

How will national certification for healthcare interpreters benefit program managers?

Healthcare interpreter certification addresses the critical language barriers that LEP patients experience as they access health care. Certification helps ensure consistency so that program managers that currently develop or manage their own methods of assessing interpreters' competency and skills can rely instead on national standards of competency. It's just smart management.

Certified healthcare interpreters:

- Meet The Joint Commission Requirements
- Provide consistency for internal screening processes
- Streamline recruiting and training
- Ensure unbiased communication between patient and provider and increase patient safety

What is the Core Certification Healthcare Interpreter™ Credential?

The Core Certification Healthcare Interpreter™ (CoreCHI™) credential is the entry point into professional certification for healthcare interpreters regardless of the language(s) in which they interpret. The CoreCHI™ certification measures the interpreter's core professional knowledge, including such vital healthcare concepts as safety protocols, universal precautions, and HIPAA. The CoreCHI™ examination also assesses the interpreter's critical thinking and ethical decision-making skills needed to perform their duties in any healthcare setting.

What is the Certified Healthcare Interpreter™ Certification?

The Certified Healthcare Interpreter™ (CHI™) certification is a language-specific assessment of the interpreter's performance skills. The CHI™ oral performance examination tests the interpreter's skills and abilities in consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, sight translation and translation. Currently, the CHI™ examination is available in Arabic, Mandarin and Spanish.

What makes CCHI the right choice for healthcare interpreter credentials?

CCHI's mission is to develop and administer a national, valid, credible, vendor-neutral certification program for healthcare interpreters. These four adjectives define our approach, guide our process, and are the critical elements that differentiate CCHI interpreters and the stakeholders who are counting on us to provide a trained, qualified, and certified population of healthcare interpreters.

CCHI's certification for healthcare interpreters is not branded to or licensed from any vendor of language services. We developed our certification from the ground up and did not rely on any commercially-oriented certification, training, testing or assessment developed by other organizations. CCHI's certification program was developed by CCHI which will retain sole ownership, as well as the ongoing responsibility for updating the program. CCHI is not derived from or related to a commercial owner/sponsor.

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CCHI serves the needs of bilingual, spoken-language healthcare interpreters committed to demonstrating their professional knowledge, skills and abilities by becoming certified based on national standards. At the same time, CCHI serves many stakeholders (healthcare providers and insurers, language agencies, training providers, government agencies, patients) who need a qualified, certified and competency-based population of healthcare interpreters to ensure effective communication between healthcare providers and insurers and their patients to ensure access to high-quality healthcare.

CCHI's certification program has been developed following the standards of the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), and CCHI received NCCA's accreditation for both CoreCHI™ and CHI™ certifications, fulfilling the validity criteria defined by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence.

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