

Language Assistance Services

Reference Guide

Purpose

This Language Assistance Services Guide was developed as a companion resource to SAPC IN 24-02, which outlines requirements for ensuring culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS). The purpose of this guide is to support providers in understanding, implementing, and maintaining compliance with the standards detailed in IN 24-02.



Language Assistance Services (LAS) include in-person interpretation, over-the-phone interpretation (OPI), video remote interpretation (VRI), translated written materials, and auxiliary aids and services. When provider treatment agencies have limited staffing (e.g., qualified bilingual staff) or insufficient equipment (e.g., assistive listening or reading resources), they may establish partnerships or contract qualified LAS vendors.

Clients may not be denied treatment based on their language preference. By utilizing these resources, providers can implement responsive language access strategies that meet the diverse communication needs of the individuals and communities they serve while remaining aligned with federal and state requirements.

Language Assistance Services and Guidelines

SERVICE TYPE	SERVICE GUIDELINES
Telephonic & Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) Services	• These services provide real-time interpretation by phone or video. • Providers must use qualified, certified interpreters or approved vendors. • Providers must use secure, HIPAA-compliant platforms.
In-Person & Sign Language Interpretation Services	• These services provide on-site spoken language or sign language interpretation. • Providers must use qualified, certified interpreters or approved vendors. • Outpatient, intensive outpatient and recovery service providers may use the Language Add-On Rate to support eligible interpretation costs.

TTY & Relay Services	• These services provide communication support for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. • Services are available via the Medi-Cal TTY line (800-735-2922)
Written Translations	• These services provide translation of vital documents into threshold languages. • Translated documents are available on the SAPC Website. • Requests for vital documents in Braille can be submitted to the SAPC Equitable Access Section (EAS) at EAS@ph.lacounty.gov.

Language Assistance Services Checklist

The Language Assistance Services checklist provide agencies with a list of best practices to support effective communication and equitable access for individuals with limited English proficiency:

- ☐ **Develop or update Language Access Plans (LAP) and LAS policies.**
These plans should clearly define how clients request and receive language assistance services, including who to contact, what services are available, and expected response times. The Department of Public Health Language Access Plan can be found on our website at [DPH LAP](#).
- ☐ **Recruit and retain qualified bilingual staff.**
Staffing decisions should reflect community language needs, and bilingual staff should be assessed to confirm proficiency before providing services.
- ☐ **Train staff in accessing interpreter services and culturally responsive communication.**
Training should include how to request interpreters, when to use qualified vendors, and how to communicate effectively through an interpreter.
- ☐ **Contract with qualified language assistance service vendors.**
Providers should ensure vendors meet certification and competency standards and are available to meet client language needs.
- ☐ **Develop culturally and linguistically appropriate materials.**
Materials should be written in plain language and translated into threshold languages to ensure client understanding.

- ☐ **Post clear multilingual signage.**
Signs should inform clients that free language assistance services are available and explain how to access them.
- ☐ **Expand access through multiple vendors and technology.**
Providers should use a mix of in-person, telephonic, and video interpretation services to ensure timely access.
- ☐ **Document clients' preferred language and regularly reconfirm needs.**
Language preferences should be recorded in client records and updated as needed to ensure appropriate services are provided.
- ☐ **Implement ongoing LAS quality improvement processes.**
Providers should regularly review service effectiveness, identify gaps, and improve access and quality of language services.

Tools and Resources for Providers

TOOL/RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
Language Assistance Add-On Rate	- For billing-related inquiries, providers may contact the Finance Department at sapc-finance@ph.lacounty.gov. - Providers may use language assistance add-on rate when delivering outpatient, intensive outpatient, or recovery services to ensure language service availability. - For detailed information on the language add-on rate, please refer to the DMC-ODS Billing Manual. The current rates matrix is available on the SAPC website.
Language Proficiency Examinations	Providers may certify bilingual staff through a SAPC approved vendor to ensure staff delivering services in languages other than English meet established proficiency standards.
LAS Vendors and How to Work with Interpreters	Resource List of Language Assistance Vendors How to Work with Interpreters SAPC Information Sheet

For additional support, contact the Equitable Access Section at EAS@ph.lacounty.gov.