

Guidance

Ask ECRI: Defining “Certified” Interpreters

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A risk manager recently asked for clarification on who can be considered a certified interpreter.

In our response, we cited the definition of a certified translator and interpreter from the [National Council on Interpreting in Health Care](#) (NCIHC) as being someone "who is certified as competent by a professional organization or government entity through rigorous testing based on appropriate and consistent criteria. Interpreters who have had limited training or have taken a screening test administered by employing a health interpreter or referral agency are not considered certified. Some programs offer a certificate of completion, but this does not equal certification."

A qualified interpreter, as defined by NCIHC, "is an individual who has been assessed for professional skills, demonstrates a high level of proficiency in at least two languages, and has the appropriate training and experience to interpret with skill and accuracy while adhering to the National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice published by the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care."

Organizations should also be familiar with [Joint Commission](#) requirements for language access and interpreter services, the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) requirements regarding effective communication, and Section 1557 of the [Affordable Care Act's](#) limited English proficiency (LEP) requirements. These guidelines, rules, and regulations will help organizations ensure that LEP patients receive the safest care possible.

The recommendations contained in Ask ECRI do not constitute legal advice. Facilities should consult legal counsel for specific guidance and develop clinical guidance in consultation with their clinical staff.

TOPICS AND METADATA

Topics

[Cultural Competency](#); [Health Literacy](#); [Quality Assurance/Risk Management](#)

Caresetting

[Ambulatory Care Center](#); [Physician Practice](#)

Roles

Allied Health Personnel; Clinical Practitioner; Healthcare Executive; Medical Staff Coordinator; Nurse; Patient Safety Officer; Quality Assurance Manager; Risk Manager

Information Type

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RELATED RESOURCES

Clinical Risk Management Services

- Get Safe! Bridging the Gap: Providing Safe, Responsive, and Individualized Care through Language and Culture

Some ECRI resources are available only within certain memberships. The Clinical Risk Management Program is provided on behalf of HRSA to HRSA-funded health centers and free clinics only. To obtain ECRI reports outside your membership, contact us by telephone at (610) 825-6000, ext. 5891, or by email at clientservices@ecri.org.