

Utilization of Trained Medical Interpreters: Results of a Survey

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Objective

To determine the utilization of trained bilingual dual role employees as interpreters on the job after having participated in the medical interpreter training programs delivered throughout the Commonwealth by the six regional Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) during the past five years.

Purpose and Background

- The regional AHEC offices have been the traditional vehicle of dissemination for the medical interpreter training program sponsored by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services
- The medical interpreter training program was a response by the Office of Medicaid to MassHealth providers that had difficulty providing quality care services to the limited English speaking patients
- Due to limited budgets, the Commonwealth responded, with the assistance of the Office of Community Programs and the Mass Health Access Programs to provide training for qualified bilingual employees to receive interpreter skill training as well as to reinforce their medical terminology language base in the source and target language
- To date the AHECs have trained over 1000 interpreters throughout the Commonwealth and other states directly via this program

Methods

- A survey implemented during a period of six months
- Surveys were collected electronically and on paper
- Links to the survey were disseminated via email to all former graduates of our programs according to our enrollment database
- Letters were sent to interpreter organizations to help promote awareness of the electronic survey tool
- In addition, paper surveys were disseminated at the end of all of the interpreter classes and conferences held during this period

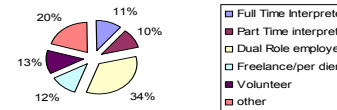
Survey Results

A total of 149 responses were received with our multi-tool approach. Medical Interpreter Training participants reported the following:

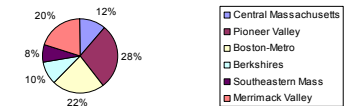
- 62% responded that they utilized the skills learned during training
- 76% of the respondents stated that the practicum experience assisted them in becoming a better interpreter
- 83% of the respondents were using all or the majority of the skills acquired in their training
- Majority of the respondents (74%) indicated that the training did not create a change in their current professional position

Survey Results Continued

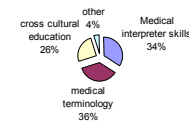
Population surveyed



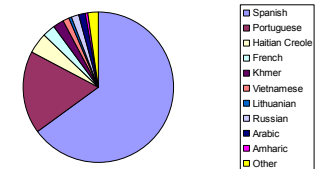
Distribution of participants surveyed by AHEC region



Most useful components of training



Language Distribution of participants



Conclusions

Based on the indicated results:

- We are reaching the desired market of employees
- The curriculum is reaching the needs of the participants
- As a result of training dual role employees and others, we are addressing the initial need raised by providers to be able to communicate with their limited English speaking patients to provide quality health care

Policy Implications

Due to the growing number of limited English speaking patients entering our health care system, the results of this evaluation illustrate that training a work force to serve two roles (current paid position as well as the trained medical interpreter position) in the system has not caused these employees to leave their current position. For a few of the trainees, an increase in salary was available. At its core, this program is working toward the improvement of patient care delivery, and patient safety. It is also beneficial to cross train employees to manage costs of a full-time dedicated interpreter.