



# **Hospital Language Services for Patients with Limited English Proficiency: Results from a National Survey**

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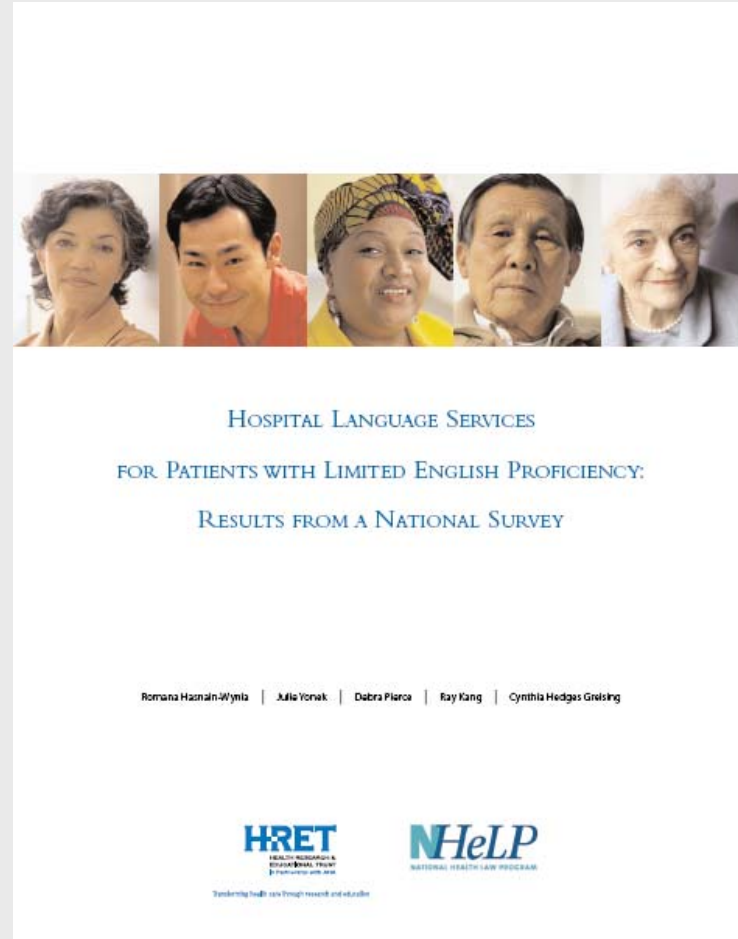
Funded by The California Endowment through a grant to  
the National Health Law Program

# Who and Why

- **Who:** The Health Research and Educational Trust (HRET), the research and educational affiliate of the American Hospital Association, conducted a national survey of hospital language services in collaboration with the National Health Law Program
- **Why:**
  - To better understand the processes and resources available to hospitals in providing language services to patients with limited English proficiency
  - To hear directly from hospitals about the kind of help they need to better respond to the communication needs of LEP patients

# The Report Covers

- Frequency of encounters with patients with limited English proficiency
- Current practices
- Resources available
- Common barriers to assessing language needs and providing services
- Tools and resources hospitals need to improve health care for patients with limited English proficiency



# Methods

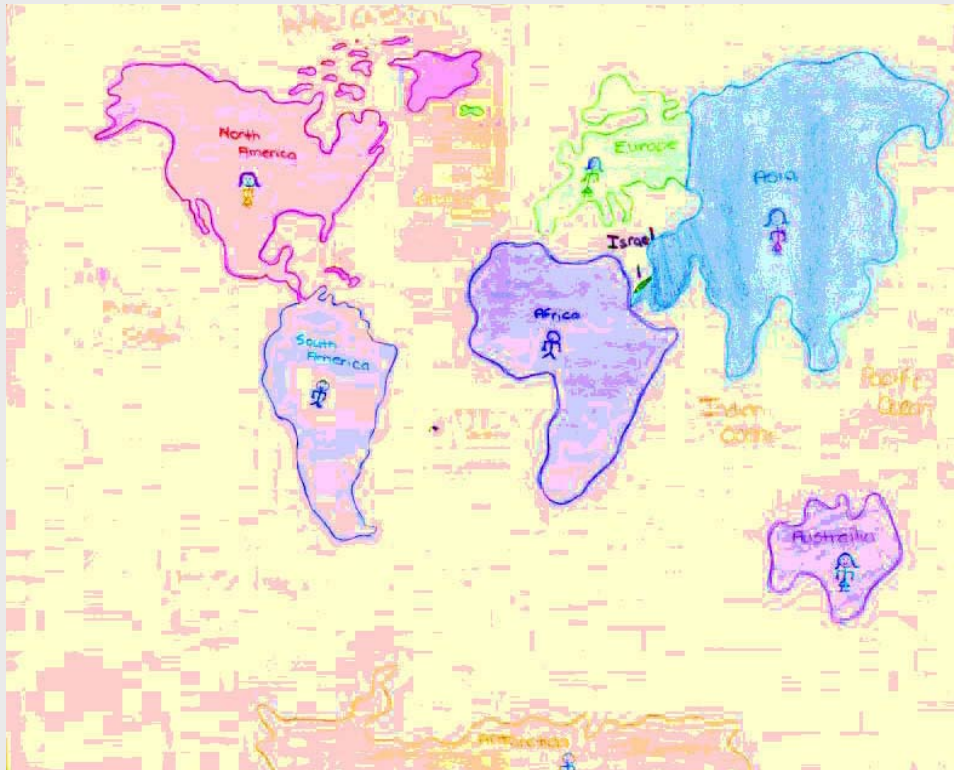
- Identified hospitals in the 2004 American Hospital Association Database
- Surveyed 1,983 hospitals, 861 completed surveys (43% response rate)
- Used sampling weights in the analysis to account for sampling design

# Encounters with LEP Patients

- 80% of hospitals encounter patients with LEP frequently
- 43% daily, 20% weekly, 17% monthly
- Hospitals encounter a very wide variety of languages



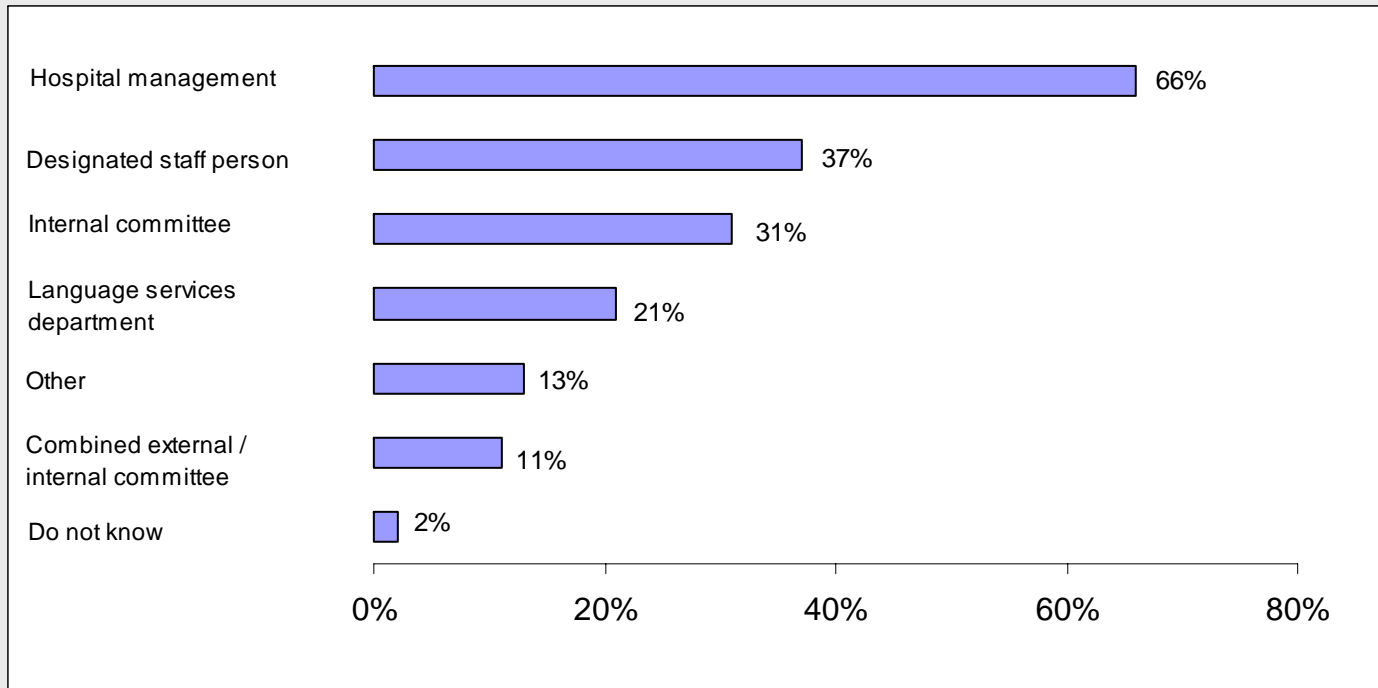
# Languages That 20% or More of Hospitals Encounter Frequently



Spanish	93%
Chinese	47%
Vietnamese	39%
Japanese	37%
Korean	37%
Russian	37%
German	36%
French	31%
Arabic	26%
Italian	26%
Laotian	23%
Hindi	22%
Polish	22%
Tagalog	21%
Thai	20%

Source: HRET, 2006

# Who Creates Policies and Procedures Regarding Language Services?

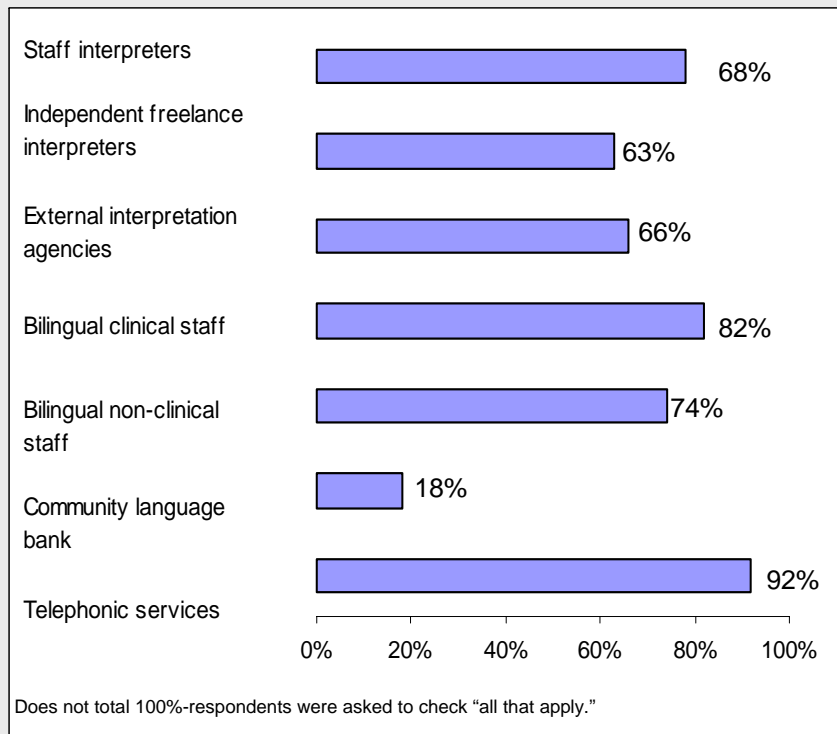


Source: HRET, 2006.

Does not total 100% - respondents were asked to check "all that apply."

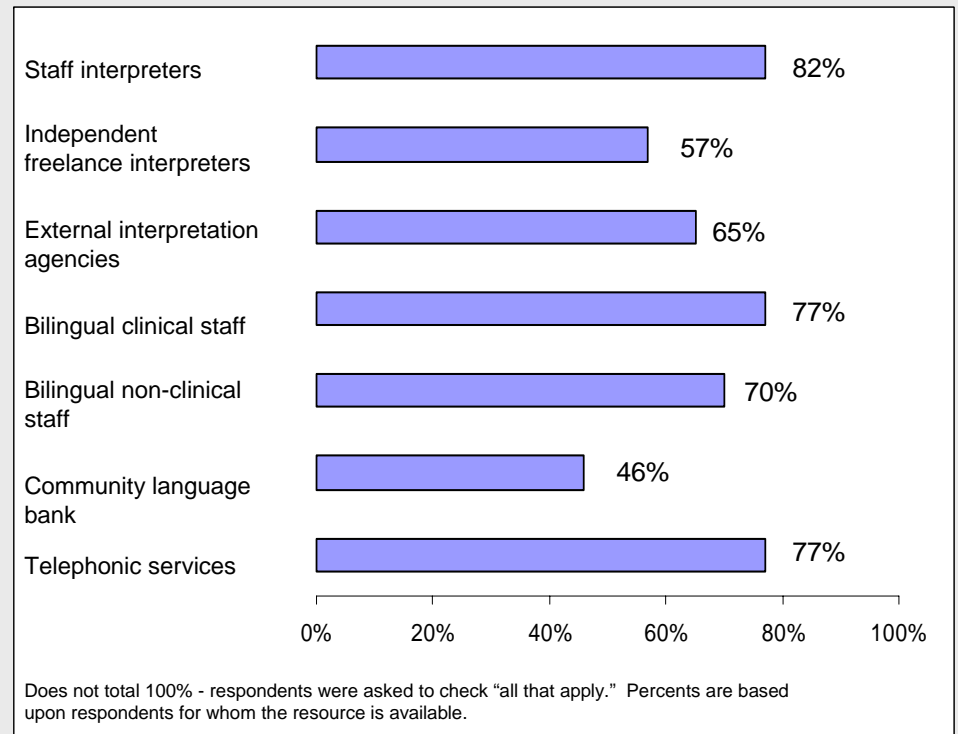
# Methods for Providing Language Services and Frequency of Use

## Methods Available for Providing Language Services



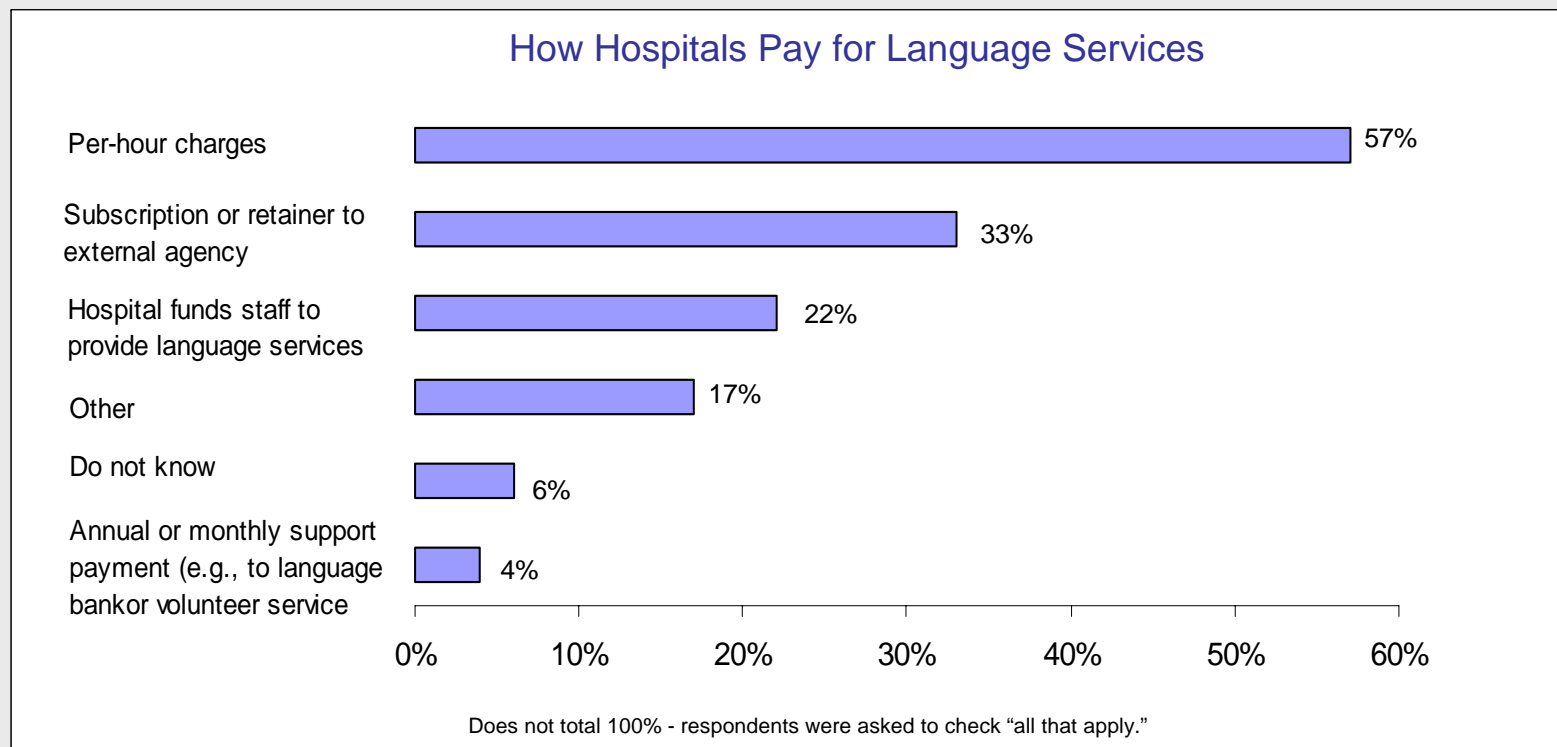
Source: HRET, 2006.

## Frequency of Use



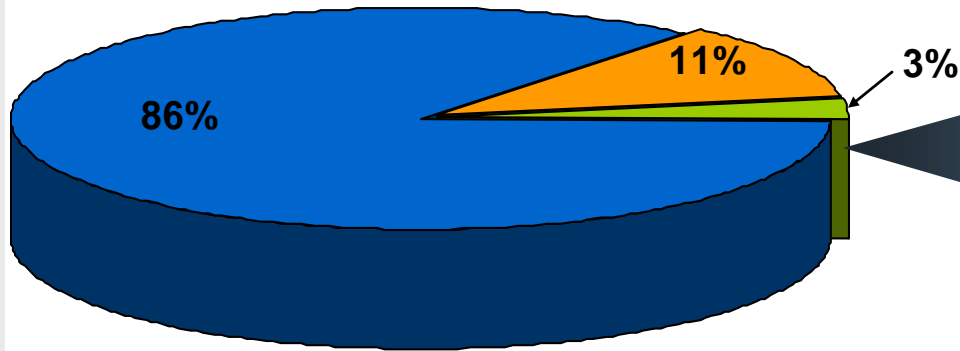
Source: HRET, 2006.

# Hospitals Have to Pay for Language Services



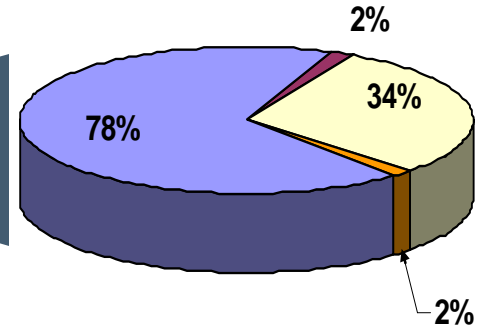
Source: HRET, 2006.

# Limited Reimbursement for Language Services



## Hospitals receiving direct reimbursement

Yes.....	3%
No.....	86%
Do not know.....	11%



## Percentage of direct sources of reimbursement

Medicaid.....	78%
Private payers.....	2%
Other.....	34%
Do not know.....	2%

Does not total 100% - respondents were asked to check "all that apply."

Percentages are based upon 3% of participants who indicated receiving direct reimbursement.

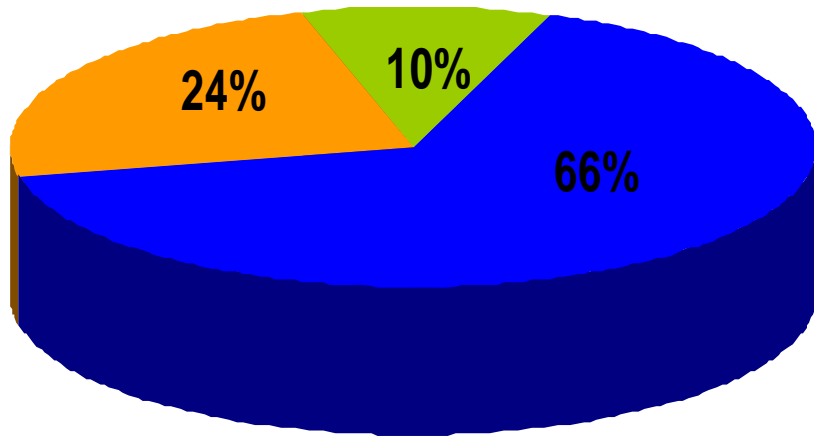
# Barriers Hospitals Face in Providing Language Services

- Staff have no means of identifying patients who need language services before they arrive at the hospital (53%)
- Cost/reimbursement concerns (48%)
- Lack of tools and training resources (41%)
- Other barriers (39%)
- Lack of community-level data (27%)
- Staff feel uncomfortable asking patients to provide information about their primary language (11%)

## Hospitals' Experiences Obtaining Information From Patients About their Primary Language

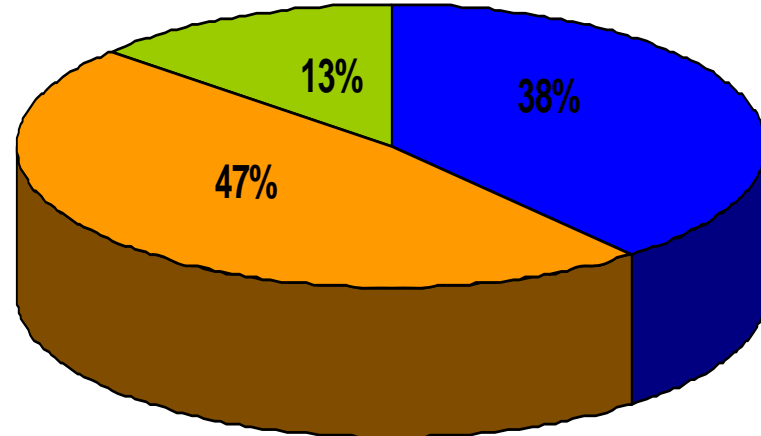
The majority of hospitals (57%) report that it is easy to determine patients' primary language, but almost 1 in 5 (18 %) say it is difficult.

# Tracking Patients' Primary Language



**Percentage of hospitals that maintain information about patients' primary language in medical records**

Yes.....66%  
 No.....24%  
 Do not know.....10%



**Percentage of hospitals that maintain a database of patients' primary language that can be tracked over time**

Yes.....38%  
 No.....47%  
 Do not know.....13%

# Tools Hospitals Would Find Useful for Providing Language Services

- Packaged in-service trainings
- Model approaches/promising practices
- Self-assessment tools
- Sample case studies

# Training Hospital Staff Would Find Useful for Providing Language Services

- How to respond to patients/family members who do not speak English
- Cultural competency training
- How to use data
- How to collect primary language information from patients

# In Summary

Fifty-two million people – 19 percent of the U.S. population – speak a language other than English at home.

Translation and interpretation services are critical to helping patients with limited English proficiency communicate and receive quality care.

In this nationwide survey:

- **80%** of hospitals treat patients with limited English proficiency frequently; virtually all provide some language services.
- **15** different languages are encountered often by more than 20 percent of US hospitals.
- Only **3** percent of hospitals receive any direct reimbursement for the language services they provide.

Many hospitals need additional resources, tools, and training.