

Setting the Stage: National Activities on Language Access

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National Health Law Program

- NHeLP is a national, non-profit law firm working on health care access and quality for low and limited income individuals on issues including language access, Medicaid, health disparities and civil rights.
- With the generous support of The California Endowment, NHeLP began the National Language Access Advocacy Project in 2003

The Societal Context for Language Access

- According to the recently released *2005 American Community Survey*, almost 52 million people speak a language other than English at home
- Between 1990 and 2000, fifteen states experienced more than 100 percent growth in their LEP populations — Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah and Washington

The Societal Context for Language Access

- Over 12 million speak English “not well” or “not at all” and over 23 million (8.6 percent of the population) speak English less than “very well”
- 29% of Spanish speakers, 13% of Asian and Pacific Islander language speakers, and 22% of Indo-European language speakers speak English less than not well or not at all
- Language barriers in health care lead to reduced quality

The Societal Context for Language Access

- Virtually all hospitals and healthcare providers must provide language services
 - any recipient of federal funds cannot discriminate on the basis of national origin (Title VI)
 - other federal statutes/regulations also require provision of language services – Hill Burton, EMTALA, Medicaid and Medicare

Language Access at the Federal Level

- National Coalition convened by NHeLP in response to growing diversity of US and increased national focus on language access
- Participants – health care provider organizations, advocates, language companies, interpreters and interpreter organizations, accrediting organizations
- Goals – The coalition seeks to develop a consensus-driven agenda to improve policies and funding for access to quality health care for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP)

Coalition's Activities

- Statement of Principles endorsed by over 70 organizations
 - the Principles represent a consensus for a framework to ensure that language barriers do not affect health outcomes
 - the coalition sought to articulate the critical importance of effective communication with LEP populations in providing quality public health programs and health care services.

Coalition's Activities

- The Language Services Resource Guide for Healthcare Providers
 - includes information about conducting a language services needs assessment, language services resource locator (including information on interpreter associations and language companies), training programs, multilingual resources, and healthcare symbols.
- Two reports being released today