

# Language Champions: The Power of Listening

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The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Language Champions Program was initially piloted in the Newborn/Infant Intensive Care Unit (N/IICU) in 2007. It was designed to increase staff and family use of the Hospital's Language Services. The program was conceived and spearheaded by Noel Rosales, M.D., director, Cultural Effectiveness Initiative, and Krista Pinola, manager, Office of Patient Safety and Quality.

Our goal was to increase the percentage of time in which interpreters were used with families with limited English proficiency (LEP). Specifically, we sought to increase interpreter use at three vital points in a patient's hospitalization: 1) admission assessment 2) informed consent discussions and 3) discharge instructions. We have seen an increase in the use of language services. We have also received staff reports of improved work satisfaction and greater comfort working with LEP families. LEP families have told us that they feel more listened to and better understood. They also tell us it is a great relief knowing that when something important needs to be said or heard, a skilled, medically trained interpreter will be available to them.

Success in the N/IICU led us to expand the program to every unit in the Main Hospital, CHOP's seven Pediatric & Adolescent Specialty Care Centers throughout the Philadelphia region, and our Home Care program. During the past year, we structured the Language Champions Program to consist of a team of at least two people from each unit — most often a nurse and social worker — who bring education and training about Language Services to their respective units. As part of the Language Champions Program, we have also created a series of weekly Frequently Asked Questions flyers that inform staff about various aspects of working with CHOP Language Services and LEP families. We have found that just having someone on a unit who can help staff overcome their discomfort with using a phone interpreter or help them request a face-to-face interpreter has increased use of interpreter services, which is supported by our annual usage data.

Staff who volunteer to be Language Champions receive training about The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Language Services Program, our policies and procedures related to the language services needs of our patients, and resource information to be used at the bedside and in exam rooms. In their role as Language Champions, these staff members are often asked to resolve specific language services issues that take place within their unit, or to bring issues to the attention of the unit's nursing and/or medical leadership to be addressed on a larger scale with unit staff.

Our Champions meet as a group on a quarterly basis with Dr. Rosales, Ms. Pinola and Social Work Supervisor Robert Westle, M.S.W., L.S.W., who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of our Language Services Program. There is also regular communication via e-mail about issues, concerns or educational programs that may be of interest to the Champions. The quarterly meetings are a forum for the group to receive updates about our Language Services program. Equally important, it is a time for the group to share triumphs and challenges with each other. The Champions are encouraged to share language services innovations they have initiated within their own units to help facilitate the use of interpreters for LEP families.

The Language Champions Program has proven to be a success at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, and an example of a "best practice" in the area of language services. Its success here would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of each of these Champions, and the support of leadership in their units.

*For additional information about the Language Champions Program, please contact Dr. Rosales at [rosales@email.chop.edu](mailto:rosales@email.chop.edu). The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the nation's first pediatric hospital, has been committed to family-centered care throughout its 155-year history. In 2009, CHOP provided more than 37,000 interpreter encounters in more than 50 different languages for its patient families.*