



December 7, 2012

Dear medical interpreters,

On the first seven days of December, the Division of Workers' Compensation of the Department of Industrial Relations of the state of California released the first draft of regulations on the utilization of interpreters that was mandated by California Senate Bill 863 when Governor Jerry Brown signed it into law on September 18, 2012. The law goes into effect on January 1, 2013.

After reviewing the draft, the following comment was submitted regarding medical interpreter qualifications:

Regarding "Evidence of these criteria may be established by a certificate of completion of a Medical or Healthcare Interpreter Certification Program issued by a California educational or vocational institution."

To ensure the quality of the interpretations and their defensibility in a court of law, the state should advise that interpreters be assessed by a psychometrically valid and reliable testing tool built to measure interpreter competency in clinical settings. This assessment is unlike any other performed by an educational or vocational institution in California in the way that the ones currently offered are not standardized and vary from program to program. That is one of the reasons California had a certification process for medical interpreters up until 2008.

There are two national processes certifying medical interpreters in the United States that meet these requirements. They test proficiency, language conversion skills, medical terminology, interpreter ethics, conduct and confidentiality. They cover the standards promulgated by the California Healthcare Interpreting Association and by the National Council on Interpreting in Healthcare.

In addition, they cover the National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services published by the Office of Minority Health of the U.S. Department of Health Human Services, and the Standards of Practice of the International Medical Interpreters Association.

They also test knowledge of the HIPAA Privacy Rule and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as they relate to interpreting.

Nationally certified medical interpreters have a continuing education requirement that ensures that the interpreters credentialed will continue to strengthen their skills and grow their knowledge base after they earn their credentials.

In terms of recognition, national certification has been recognized by the state of Oregon, Texas and New York; Washington state may soon follow.

Both exams are readily available to any interpreter in California that wishes to specialize just like judiciary and conference interpreters do.

Lastly, both certifications allow for online verification of credentials by visiting:

National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters

<http://www.certifiedmedicalinterpreters.org/registry>

Certification Committee for Healthcare Interpreters

<http://www.healthcareinterpretercertification.org/cchi-interpreters/registry/181.html>

To read the proposed regulations and all the forum reviews submitted, please go to the following link:

<http://www.dir.ca.gov/dwc/DWCWCABForum/InterpreterCertification.htm>

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The International Medical Interpreters Association is committed to advancing the profession. Among many other things we are working on, the IMIA is doing this by making sure its members stay informed of new developments, and we urge all other organizations with members in California to do the same.

We have also discovered from several sources that medical interpreters throughout the state are being fed information that is not accurate. That does not help with the fragmentation that already exists in the field.

For the most up to date neutral information regarding the recognition of national credentials in California, give me call at (415) 496-6363, or send me an eMail at IMIACalifornia@imiaweb.org.

Sincerely,

Carlos García, CMI-Spanish
San Francisco, CA
California Chapter Chair
IMIA