



I am happy to present another great company, Voices For Health. The VFH CEO Michelle Scott and COO Carlos Pava have both received prestigious awards for their contributions in Language Access service.

Cynthia M, Schenck
CEO Medical Interpreters of the North Shore
IMIA Board Director
IMIA ISP Journalist

1. Tell me about your business, how/why/when did it begin?

Voices For Health, Inc. had humble beginnings as a home office in 1997. As a Spanish-speaking Registered Nurse who was providing care to our local Hispanic population, I saw a huge need for improving the quality of medical interpreting services in our community. We were the first company in Michigan to begin assessing and training medical interpreters. Confidentiality was also a core component of our interpreting program (prior to HIPAA mandates!). Within two years, we had expanded our interpreting services to include about 10 languages. Our first paying customer was for our "Spanish Language & Culture for Healthcare Providers" course.

We now provide on-site interpreting services in more than 45 languages, telephonic interpreting in over 180 languages and written translation in more than 25 languages. We have recently added written accommodation for blind and visually-impaired patients (Braille transcription, large print and audio recordings).

We are committed to helping our healthcare customers comply with language accommodation mandates as well as advocating for LEP, Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing and Blind/Visually Impaired patients.

2. What is your core business (primary product or service) and who is your consumer?

Our core business is providing language and culture solutions to healthcare, educational and social service organizations. We have five main services: medical interpreting, written translation, continuing education for healthcare providers and medical interpreters (on-site and through VoicesACADEMY, our new upcoming online portal), multimedia production and multilingual research. This last category includes, for example, conducting focus groups and organizational language accommodation audits.

Our headquarters is located in Grand Rapids, MI and we have satellite offices in Lansing, MI, Detroit, MI and Los Angeles, CA.

Our customers are healthcare organizations throughout the U.S.: physician practices, clinics, public health departments, hospitals, health advocacy/education organizations (e.g., NMDP, LLS) and government health divisions (e.g., NCI, CDC).

3. What is the greatest challenge Voices For Health faces in providing consistent and competent quality service?

Our greatest challenge is managing growth appropriately and successfully in the face of a consistently increasing demand for services. For example, in the past year and a half, we have contracted with 5 new hospital systems in 4 cities across the state of Michigan; we have therefore established interpreting teams in two new dispatch sites, while expanding a third. It is critical for us to have turn-key processes in place, as well as adequate short- and long-term planning.

4. How does Voice For Health recruit qualified and competent Interpreters?

We use a number of methods for interpreter recruitment, including referrals from existing interpreters, online advertising (including our website and IMIA) and community networking. Interpreters must submit a completed application and have an interview that includes a language assessment and interpreting assessment.

5. What type of training do you require of your interpreters?

Our interpreters must complete our proprietary training that covers professional codes of ethics, standards of practice, HIPAA and company policies/procedures. Some of our customers also require that the interpreters attend their own hospital in-service.

6. What are the top three languages most requested?

We provide on-site interpreters throughout the state of Michigan from 5 dispatch sites: The top three languages requested statewide are Spanish, Vietnamese and ASL.

7. Has Voices For Health found any particular technology effective in managing business?

“Smart phones” are particularly useful, as they can incorporate texting, emailing, video calls, internet maps and GPS navigation!

8. Has Voices For Health been able to give back to the community in any specific way?

Yes, we feel that this is a critical component of conducting business. We give back to the community in various ways, such as volunteering services (e.g., simultaneous interpreting for the mayor’s annual state of the city address), promoting community activities and programs, organizing fundraising teams (e.g., Hospice of Michigan “Walk to Remember” and March of Dimes “March for Babies”), and volunteering in leadership roles for numerous community organizations (e.g., Latino Health Coalition, March of Dimes).

9. How do you see your role within the IMIA as an IMIA ISP member?

As a corporate member of the IMIA, we represent the organization and as such should do so with integrity and enthusiasm. We promote IMIA resources (e.g., via the website) and activities (e.g., webinars) to our customers and interpreters. We encourage interpreters and hospital language agencies to join as IMIA members. As an ISP member, I am thrilled to have been appointed to moderate the ISP Listserve, through which I hope to generate meaningful industry-appropriate conversations. Our team is also looking forward attending as many online and on-site educational opportunities as possible.

10. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your service?

Our commitment to providing high quality services, maintaining customer loyalty and serving the community has been recognized with numerous awards throughout the past 15 years. Our team has been recognized by the National Institutes of Health with more than 10 “Plain Language” awards for our work in helping to create easy-to-read Spanish educational materials. Our CEO, Michelle Scott, recently received an “Alumni Service Award” from Michigan State University. Our COO, Carlos Pava, was the recipient of “Hispanic Excellence” by SBC Ameritech. We received the “Small Business of the Year” award by the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce and “Champions of Diversity” by the United Way.