



## Tips for Working with Limited English Proficient (LEP) Members

- **California law** requires that health plans and insurers offer free interpreter services to both LEP members and health care providers and also ensure that the interpreters are professionally trained and are versed in medical terminology and health care benefits.
- **Who is a LEP member?**  
Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English, may be considered limited English proficient (LEP).
- **How to identify a LEP member over the phone**
  - Member is quiet or does not respond to questions
  - Member simply says yes or no, or gives inappropriate or inconsistent answers to your questions
  - Member may have trouble communicating in English or you may have a very difficult time understanding what they are trying to communicate
  - Member self identifies as LEP by requesting language assistance.
- **Tips for working with LEP members and how to offer interpreter services**
  - 1) Member speaks no English and you are unable to discern the language  
→ Connect with contracted telephonic interpretation vendor to identify language needed.
  - 2) Member speaks some English:  
→ Speak slowly and clearly. Do not speak loudly or shout. Use simple words and short sentences.  
  
→ How to offer interpreter services:  
*“I think I am having trouble with explaining this to you, and I really want to make sure you understand. Would you mind if we connected with an interpreter to help us? Which language do you speak?”*  

Or

*“May I put you on hold? I am going to connect us with an interpreter.”* (If you are having a difficult time communicating with the member)
- **Best practice to capture language preference**  
For LEP members it is a best practice to capture the members preferred language and record it in the plan’s member data system.  
*“In order for me (or Health Plan) to be able to communicate most effectively with you, may I ask what your preferred spoken and written language is?”*

\*This universal symbol for interpretive services at the top right of this document is from Hablamos Juntos, a Robert Wood Johnson funded project found at:  
[http://www.hablamosjuntos.org/signage/symbols/default.using\\_symbols.asp#bpw](http://www.hablamosjuntos.org/signage/symbols/default.using_symbols.asp#bpw)