

Protocol for how to access interpreting services

Face-to-face, over-the-phone, and American Sign Language

Why does Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan provide free interpreting services?

Federal law requires that healthcare providers who see government program recipients provide free language assistance to limited English proficient (LEP) and hard-of-hearing or deaf persons. In order for you to meet this legal requirement, Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan (Blue Shield Promise) is providing over-the-phone, face-to-face, and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting services at no cost to Blue Shield Promise providers and members.

When are over-the-phone interpreting services recommended?

- ❖ When you identify a patient as being limited English proficient (LEP) and the patient is already present at the office, telephone interpretation should be used immediately to avoid any delay in service.
- ❖ When an LEP patient requests it.

Telephone interpretation is available 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK.

DURING BUSINESS HOURS:

1. Call the Blue Shield Promise Customer Care Department

Medi-Cal (Los Angeles) (800) 605-2556 (TTY: 711)

Medi-Cal (San Diego) (855) 699-5557 (TTY: 711)

8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday

OR

2. Call Pacific Interpreters

Los Angeles (844) 765-5899

San Diego (844) 765-6012

AFTER BUSINESS HOURS:

1. **Call Pacific Interpreters**

All counties (844) 765-6011

A Pacific Interpreters Customer Care Agent will ask for the following information:

- Member's First & Last Name & Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan ID#
- Language needed

2. **If your office has after hours answering services:** Ensure that their staff can speak languages other than English. Please ensure that they know how to connect to an interpreter over the telephone.
3. **If your office has on-call physicians/nurses:** Ensure that they know how to connect to an interpreter over the telephone.
4. **If your office has an answering machine:** Let the patients know that they need to call Pacific Interpreters.

When are face-to-face and American Sign Language interpreting services recommended?

- ❖ To explain complex medical condition or education (i.e., medical diagnosis, treatment options, insulin instructions, etc.) to a LEP or a hard-of-hearing or deaf member.
- ❖ When a LEP patient requests it.

All requests must be made with an advance notice (3 business days). Please contact the Blue Shield Promise Customer Care Department for further assistance:

Medi-Cal (Los Angeles) (800) 605-2556 (TTY: 711)

Medi-Cal (San Diego) (855) 699-5557 (TTY: 711)

8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday

Please contact the Blue Shield Promise Customer Care Department at least 48 hours in advance if the appointment has been CANCELLED or RESCHEDULED.

When is California Relay Service (TTY/Telecommunication Device for Deaf - TDD) recommended?

- ❖ When your office staff need to communicate with hard-of-hearing or deaf patients, please call California Relay Service:
 - English (888) 877-5379
 - Spanish (888) 877-5381
- ❖ When your hard-of-hearing or deaf patients need assistance to call your office or Blue Shield Promise, please dial:
 - Los Angeles (800) 735-2929 (TTY: 711)
 - San Diego (866) 461-4288

PLEASE KEEP IN MIND:

1. Always document the member's preferred language in the member's medical record.
2. Always document the request or refusal of interpreting services in the member's medical record.
3. Always post an "Interpreting Services sign" at key medical and non-medical points of contact.
4. Please discourage patients from using friends and family members as interpreters unless the member requests it after being informed about the availability of the free interpreter services.