

## Ohio Department of Mental Health

**DOCUMENT NUMBER:** CR-01

**TYPE OF DOCUMENT:** Policy

**AUTHORITY SOURCE:** Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq) and its implementing regulation, 45CFR Part 84; Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

**DOCUMENT TITLE:** Central Office Interpreter Policy

**APPLICABILITY STATEMENT:** All Central Office Employees

**"EXCEPTIONS" IF APPLICABLE:** None

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** January 1, 2010

**REPLACES:** New

**DIRECTED TO:** All ODMH Central Office Employees

**DISTRIBUTED BY:** Division of Program & Policy Development

### Central Office Interpreter Policy

#### A. Purpose

1. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that ODMH provides language interpreter services as needed for individuals who come to ODMH Central Office (CO) for information, meetings, and training, or who call the department. This policy also establishes expectations and a consistent process for accessing interpreter services within CO, with the goal of ensuring that all communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate.
2. Implementation of this policy is expected to improve communication and foster greater understanding among consumers, family members, and staff who are in need of language interpreter services. We expect this to result in more effective and productive phone calls, meetings, training and referral services, and to foster an environment of increased cultural competence.

#### B. Definitions

1. "Interpretation" means the oral, or sign language transfer of a message from one language into another language.
2. "Interpreter services" means a business that provides qualified interpreters on an as-needed basis.
3. "Limited English proficiency" means an individual who is unable to speak, read, write or understand the English language at a level that permits him or her to interact effectively with mental health professionals or others.

4. "Qualified interpreter" means someone with specialized interpretation training that is culturally competent and linguistically appropriate.
5. "Qualified sign language interpreter" means an individual who is a qualified interpreter as defined by the ADA: "an interpreter who is able to interpret effectively, accurately and impartially both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary." (Federal Register, July 26, 1991, p. 35553 and 35717). Such an individual is highly skilled in receptive and expressive American Sign Language and follows a standard code of ethics.
6. "Toll-Free Bridge" means the telecommunications service based in CO that provides confidential referrals to emergency services, mental health boards, mental health agencies, client rights advocates, ODMH hospital services and resources for consumers and family members who contact the department through its toll-free number or in person.

#### C. Policy

1. CO shall provide meaningful access to qualified interpreters in a timely manner and at no cost to consumers, family members, and staff who are limited in English proficiency, or who are deaf/hard of hearing.
  - a. The eighth floor reception desk staff will be the first point of contact for individuals who arrive at the department and require interpreter services. ODMH staff shall assure that there is information regarding interpreter services offered by the department in plain view for the public.
  - b. A copy of this policy will be posted at the eighth floor reception desk as reference for all staff and visitors.
2. CO shall provide and maintain, at a minimum, the following equipment and services:
  - a. On-going agreement(s) for provision of interpreter services by qualified interpreters.
  - b. Contact information for qualified interpreter services provided by the Human Resources Division, Office of EEO.
  - c. A permanent telecommunication device for the deaf (TTY) which will be available during standard business hours, and located on the eighth floor at the reception desk and in the Toll-Free Bridge office.
  - d. Tele-interpreter services provided for individuals who arrive at the department by the eighth floor reception desk staff.
3. The Human Resources Division, as part of new staff orientation, will provide training related to access and utilization of interpreter services and barriers to traditional verbal/English communication.

#### D. Procedure

1. When an individual who has limited English proficiency and requires interpreter services arrives unexpectedly at CO in any office or department, the following will occur:

- a. The individual will be assisted to the front desk on the eighth floor as the first point of contact.
  - b. The ODMH representative at the front desk on the eighth floor will escort the individual to an unoccupied private room with a telephone.
  - c. The ODMH representative will contact by telephone, the tele-interpreter service number located on file at the front desk on the eighth floor. Once connected to the service, the representative will provide the access code and will request assistance from the operator.
  - d. Payment for the tele-interpreter services will be the responsibility of the Consumer Advocacy and Protection (CAP) office.
2. When an individual who is deaf/hard of hearing and requires interpreter services arrives unexpectedly at CO in any office or department, the following will occur:
- a. The individual will be directed to the ODMH representative at the front desk on the eighth floor as the first point of contact, who will then contact a CAP office representative to assist the individual. If no one from the CAP office is available, a representative of the office of Consumer and Recovery Supports (CRS) may assist.
  - b. The CAP/CRS office representative will meet and escort the individual to an unoccupied video conference room.
  - c. The CAP/CRS office representative shall contact the contracting video or community interpreting agency/person and request that a qualified sign-language interpreter be made available through video for the individual as quickly as possible.
  - d. Payment for the services of the contracting video or community interpreting agency/person will be the responsibility of the CAP office.
3. For scheduled meetings/trainings at CO in which attendees have limited English proficiency or are deaf/hard of hearing, the following will occur:
- a. The ODMH representative who schedules the meeting/training shall contact the Division of Human Resources Office of EEO and obtain information regarding qualified interpreting agencies.
  - b. The Office of EEO will provide information and services regarding the use of interpreter services and adherence to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
  - c. The ODMH representative of the sponsoring office must then contact the qualified interpreter agency and request that a qualified interpreter be provided for the scheduled meeting/training.
    - i. Notification to request interpreter services must occur at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting.

- ii. Once the request has been made, a Request to Purchase (RTP) form must be immediately completed by the sponsoring office and sent to the Office of Fiscal Services.
  - iii. If necessary, cancellation of the requested interpreter services must occur at least twenty-four hours prior to the scheduled meeting/training.
  - iv. Payment for the interpreter services is the responsibility of the sponsoring office.
4. ODMH representative(s) must always use the best interest of the consumer and/or family member and respect for their choices as the guiding principles when decisions are made regarding interpreter services. Until an interpreter is available, department representatives will use every means available to communicate with the individual in need of interpreter services, including writing, pictures, gestures, etc.