

# California Language Assistance Program



May/2012

California Senate Bill 853, "The Health Care Language Assistance Act," requires insurers to establish and support a language assistance program for certain California residents who have limited English proficiency. To meet this need, Bakersfield Family Medical Center/Heritage Physician Network has developed a California Language Assistance Program (CALAP) for eligible plan participants. Through this program, we offer free interpreter services and translation of BFMC's vital standard and non-standard documents.\*

## **Who is eligible for CALAP services?**

All health plan participants who live in California are eligible.

## **How can my patients obtain free interpreter services?**

Your CALAP-eligible BFMC/HPN patients can obtain free interpreter services by telephone, in any language, by calling the telephone number on the back of their ID card or on the language assistance notice enclosed with vital documents they receive from us (e.g., explanation of benefits).

## **How can my patients obtain vital documents that have been translated?**

We will proactively send standard translated vital documents to those who have registered indicating that their written language preference is Spanish. Individuals may register their written or spoken language preference, as well as their race or ethnicity, in two ways: Call the telephone number on the back of their ID card, or complete and send to us the survey provided with their enrollment materials.

We will also translate vital non-standard documents into Spanish upon request. Documents that are not considered vital will not be translated.

## **What are the CALAP's key requirements health care professionals?**

Please refer to the requirements chart on the next page.

\* Vital documents are those that affect your patients' benefits and coverage. Vital standard documents are generic and contain no specific health plan participant information, such as applications and consent forms. Vital non-standard documents are customer-specific and may contain personal health information, such as denial letters and explanations of benefits.

## Requirements for health care professionals

- Comply with CALAP if your contract was issued, amended, delivered, or renewed on or after January 1, 2009.
- Discourage use of family and friends, especially minors, as interpreters.
- Document a patient's refusal of interpreter services in his or her medical record.
- Advise your limited English proficient patients to call us for all translations of vital documents that affect their coverage.
- Call Customer Service to request language preference information for your patient (optional). Their written language preference must be registered with Cigna for them to proactively receive vital standard translated documents in Spanish or Traditional Chinese.
- Post translated standard vital documents on the BFMC website next to the English vital documents.
- Provide cultural competency and CALAP procedural training for all BFMC staff that routinely interact with CALAP-eligible customers.

## Requirements for BFMC/HPN

- Inform health plan participants that interpreter and translation services are available at no cost to them by including a language assistance notice, in 13 non-English languages, in all of their vital documents.
- Offer verbal interpretation services in any language at all health care professional points of contact.
- Discourage use of family and friends, especially minors, as interpreters.
- Use qualified interpreters and bilingual staff who have been tested for proficiency and are knowledgeable about health care benefit terminology in non-English language(s).
- Translate vital standard documents into Spanish and Traditional Chinese. Proactively send them to eligible health plan participants who have registered their written language preference as one of these languages.
- Translate vital non-standard documents into Spanish and Traditional Chinese, upon the request of an eligible plan participant, and send the documents within 21 calendar days.
- Collect and store health plan participants' race and ethnicity information, as well as their preferred spoken and written languages, in a secure database to ensure confidentiality.
- Assess customers' demographics at least every three years to identify threshold languages.
- Keep a record of a customer's refusal of interpreter services.
- Document, track, and trend complaints about the CALAP.
- Monitor compliance with the CALAP.

## Questions?

If you have any questions about the California Language Assistance Program, please call Quality Management at (661)327-4411

