

Recommendation from WFSE/AFSCME Council 28 and DSHS/HCA
Ad Hoc Union Management Committee
Professional Development and Training
July – December 2011

Our CBA states that the committee will discuss the following:

- Produce a list of continuing education courses offered by professional interpreter organizations or higher education institutions. The list of continuing education courses will be regularly updated and published on the DSHS website.
- Explore possibilities of partnering with professional interpreter organizations on professional development and training for interpreters.
- Explore possibilities to promote the use of skilled and experienced interpreters for use by the State and/or third parties.
- Determine whether there is a financial impact of any recommendation(s) developed from this ad hoc committee.

Below are the final recommendations to which this committee agreed.

Recommendation 1: Form a Public-Private Partnership for Professional Development and Training for Social Service and Medical Interpreters

Composition of the “DSHS-WFSE/AFSCME Professional Development Committee”:

1 representative from each of the following organizations:

- The State: DSHS LTC
- The Union: Local 1671
- Professional Organizations operating in Washington (as defined by Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code), for example WITS or NOTIS

Meeting Frequency:

Monthly meeting, not necessarily face to face

Statement of Purpose:

In an effort to maintain the skill level that interpreters possess at the time they pass the Department of Social and Health Services certification examinations, Washington State and Interpreters United, Local 1671 agreed

to encourage each certified or authorized interpreter to complete continuing education activities and earn continuing education credits.

Continuing education refers to educational activities in which interpreters participate to improve their professional knowledge, skills, and abilities. The instruction may be directly related to the act of interpreting, or may cover terminology, special topics and areas of expertise. The courses may be a short-term workshop or long-term such as a conference or sequence of classes.

Criteria for Approving Courses to Publish:

Submission Requirements

A separate request must be submitted for each course to be published. The committee will agree upon and publically share contact information for submitting courses. Continuing education activities may include courses offered at accredited institutions of higher learning or conferences or workshops sponsored by professional organizations provided the topic is relevant to interpreting and approved by the DSHS-WFSE/AFSCME Professional Development Committee. The person submitting the application will be informed of the decision. The application must include the following information:

1. Course outline or syllabus
2. Record of date(s) and location(s) of activity
3. Curriculum vita or resume of instructor(s)

Instructor Requirements

Instructors shall meet the following the following minimum qualifications:

Interpreting Classes: Have at least a bachelor's degree from a U.S. university or the equivalent degree from a foreign university and at least five years experience in interpreting OR possess Washington State certification or registration, or national or federal interpreter certification.

Translation Classes: Have at least a bachelor's degree from a U.S. university or the equivalent from a foreign university and have at least five years experience as a professional translator OR be accredited by a recognized professional translators association OR possess a university degree in translation or valid credentials as a translator from another country.

Other Classes: Possess the necessary credentials to practice their profession or trade (an academic degree, license, certificate, etc.) and have at least five years experience in their profession or trade or have experience teaching the subject of the course in question.

The DSHS-WFSE/AFSCME Professional Development Committee may waive any requirement for individuals on a case-by-case basis and particular consideration will be given to the topic of the continuing education activity.

Appeals process:

If there is a challenge to the one of the courses not being accepted, DSHS LTC representative (Dr. Fu as of 11/22/2011) would make the final decision to accept the course for publication or not.

Financial impact:

24-36 hours of paid time for one DSHS LTC staff annually (0.05-0.075% of an FTE).

Recommendation 2: End DSHS LTC’s “provisional authorization” for Spanish, Russian, Korean and Mandarin in order to promote the use of skilled interpreters

Background:

The “provisional authorization” is given to interpreters who have taken and passed the written exam, as well as coming within a certain percentage of passing the oral exam.

DSHS LTC reinitiated a “provisional authorization” in 2003 because:

- 1.) It appeared there were not enough medical or social service interpreters available to meet DSHS’ language access needs;
- 2.) There was a need to ensure availability of interpreters in languages with newly-increasing demand.

Supporting arguments:

- 1.) As of November 2011, Washington State has the following number of DSHS certified medical and social service interpreters in each language:
 - a. Mandarin = 385*
 - b. Korean = 441*
 - c. Russian = 2,153*
 - d. Spanish = 4,782*

* Includes interpreters who are certified in both medical and social service interpreting.

- 2.) As of April 2009, Washington State has less than 5% appointments going unfilled through the HCA Interpreter Services Program for the recommended languages.
- 3.) Higher quality interpreting services ensures fewer cases of misdiagnosis, medication errors, general misunderstandings which contribute to negative health outcomes, reduces costs associated with unnecessary testing, return visits, and avoidable care/encounters.
- 4.) Higher quality interpreting services ensures higher quality communication, leading to more effective resource utilization in social service settings.

Eliminating the “provisional authorization” for these recommended languages is a step towards ensuring DSHS LTC is meeting its stated goal “to ensure the quality of interpreter services provided.”

Financial impact: Zero.

Potential savings because of more effective resource utilization (see supporting arguments #3-4).