INFORMATION SHEET

Washington State
**Department of Social
& Health Services**

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**Preliminary Elements of
Medical Interpreter Testing & Certification**

September 11, 2023

Please consider the following elements as you create recommendations for our discussion on how the State of Washington can support having more qualified medical interpreters.

I. Testing Entities[1]
- Must have expertise and sustainable resources to develop and update tests.
- Must have the necessary technology to deliver online tests.
- Must have the resources to maintain and update the technology routinely.
- Must have processes that align with national and industry standards of medical interpreter testing.

II. Technology
- 24/7 access to registration/scheduling.
- Virtual testing, or easily accessible test centers.
- Virtual proctors / ID verification available (e.g., through ProctorU service)
- Quick written test score reporting turn-around (immediate or within 48 hours for written tests).
- Reasonable cost to candidates based on industry standards.

III. Tests
(1) Pre-requisite and screening
  o Proof of bilingual and multi-lingual proficiency: Passing score of a formal test, school diplomas of education conducted in the language other than English (LOTE), experience living in the country with primary language other than English, and documented work experience.
  o Training in interpreting skills
(2) Test content
  o Proficiency in English and languages other than English.
  o Domain knowledge: Healthcare system, medical terminology, and procedures
  o Medical interpreter ethics.
  o Interpreting skills (e.g., sight translation, consecutive interpretation, and memory retention).
(3) Test quality
  o Tests must meet national standards and federal requirements.
  o Tests must be valid and reliable.
  o Testing entities must provide reports demonstrating test validity and reliability.[2]

IV. Resources to support clients and healthcare providers
- A platform accessible by healthcare providers to look for interpreters.
- Approved continuing education (CE) courses.
- Certification distribution and revocation systems.
- Customer complaint resolution process.
- Other customer services.

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[1] Testing entities can be private, non-profit, or public agencies

[2] References on the definitions of test validity and reliability:
  - English language assessment, Cambridge University
  - Phelan, Colin; and Wren, Julie. 2005-06. Exploring reliability in academic assessment.
  - Volchok, Edward. 2015. Measurements and measurements scales.
  - Thompson, Nathan, 2022. Test score reliability and validity.

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EXAMPLES OF MEDICAL INTERPRETER TESTING AND CERTIFICATION OPTIONS

Example (1)
Form a statewide coordinating office dedicated to medical interpreter testing & certification.
- Form referral networks with third-party entities to test and certify medical interpreters.
- Testing/Certification entities manage credential renewals: Approve and track CE credits.
- Maintain a list of statewide medical interpreters with active credentials.
- Discuss: Who will provide customer service support?

Example (2)
State of Washington directly contracts with a medical interpreter testing and certification entity. The contracted entity will:
- Manage credential renewals: Approve and track CE credits.
- Maintain a list of statewide medical interpreters with active credentials.
- Discuss: Who will provide customer service support?

Example (3)
Higher education institutions, for example, might add a medical interpreter testing and certification program to their current certification course platform. They might provide:
- Testing, test preparation, and interpreter skills training.
- Develop or approve continuing education courses.
- Discuss: Who will provide customer service support?