



Language Services Policy

1. Purpose

The WA health system is committed to providing high quality, safe and accessible health care to all Western Australians who may need language assistance when using WA health system services. This includes those who cannot effectively communicate in written and/or spoken standard Australian English (Standard English) such as some Aboriginal people, some people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people who are Deaf or hard of hearing who communicate in Auslan.

The Language Services Policy (the policy) establishes the minimum standards to enable effective communication with consumers and carers who have difficulty communicating in Standard English, or who are Deaf or hard of hearing, for the delivery of culturally appropriate and/or trauma informed care that is equitable, non-discriminatory, respectful and safe.

This policy supports the delivery of free, targeted language services that promote fundamental consumer rights such as access to high quality care and services, safety, respect, communication and participation.

The policy aligns to the State Government [Western Australian Language Services Policy 2020](#).

This policy is a mandatory requirement for health service providers (HSPs) under the *Communications Policy Framework* pursuant to section 26(2)(c) of the *Health Services Act 2016*.

This policy is also a mandatory requirement for the Department of Health pursuant to section 29 of the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*.

2. Applicability

This policy is applicable to WA health entities.

The requirements contained within this policy are applicable to the services purchased from contracted health entities where it is explicitly stated in the contract between the contracted health entity and the State of Western Australia or HSP. The State of Western Australia or HSP contract manager is responsible for ensuring that any obligation to comply with this policy by the contracted health entity is accurately reflected in the relevant contract and managed accordingly.

3. Policy Requirements

3.1 WA health entities must:

- apply language service procedures relevant to their workplace, where these have been developed, to enable appropriate and timely engagement of interpreters and translators, particularly to manage situations with health, legal or other risks for consumers or the WA health system
- provide all consumers and carers who need assistance with standard English with access to appropriate interpreting and translating assistance
- ensure staff members who engage with consumers and carers, have the cultural and linguistic knowledge and skills to assess the need for language services through appropriate training
- engage tertiary qualified and/or National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) credentialed interpreters and translators through the Common User Arrangement (CUA) for interpreting and translating services
- develop information in accessible formats for those who are not described in this policy, such as some people with cognitive disabilities or acquired brain injuries, but who still require assistance with standard English.

3.2 All new staff members must complete the WA Health Language Services eLearning module (available through My Learning) within 6 months of their commencement date.

4. Compliance Monitoring

WA health entities must report the following information to the System Manager using the Language Services Annual Report Template:

- Number of staff who have completed cultural awareness and/or language services training.
- Number of interpreters engaged, identified by language.
- Expenditure on interpreters, identified by language.
- Number of translations completed, identified by language.
- Expenditure on translators, identified by language.

The Cultural Diversity Unit, Department of Health, on behalf of the System Manager, will collate the data received and prepare a submission of the summary annual report.

5. Related Documents

The following documents are mandatory pursuant to this policy:

- [Language Services Procedure](#)
- [Language Services Annual Reporting Template](#)
- [Language Services eLearning module \(available through My Learning\)](#)

6. Supporting Information

The following information is not mandatory but informs and/or supports the implementation of this policy:

- [Language Services Guidelines](#)

- [Decision making tree for engaging an interpreter](#)

7. Definitions

The following definition(s) are relevant to this policy.

| Term | Definition |
|--------------------------|--|
| Auslan | Australian sign language is a recognised language used by the Australian Deaf ¹ community. Auslan does not follow English sentence structure and has its own grammar and vocabulary. ⁱ |
| Carers | <p>The <i>Carer's Recognition Act 2004</i> defines a person as a carer if they provide ongoing care or assistance to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a person with a disability as defined in the <i>Disability Services Act 1993</i> section 3; • a person who has a chronic illness, including a mental illness as defined in the <i>Mental Health Act 1996</i> section 3; • a person who, because of frailty, requires assistance with carrying out everyday tasks; or • a person of a prescribed class. <p>For the purposes of this policy the term carer also includes 'parents', 'guardians' or people looking after children under 18 years of age and young people who care for their parents. For Aboriginal people and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, the term may also include any family member who is available to take on the responsibility of caring for another member of the family, including extended family members.</p> |
| Consumers | This term is intended to be as broad and inclusive as possible and includes individuals or groups who may also be known as 'patients' or 'clients' within the WA health system. |
| Contracted health entity | A non-government entity that provides health services, goods and support services under a contract or other agreement entered into with the Director General on behalf of the State, a health service provider or the Minister. |
| Health service provider | <p>Means a health service provider established by an order made under section 32(1)(b) of the <i>Health Services Act 2016</i> and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Metropolitan Health Service • South Metropolitan Health Service • East Metropolitan Health Service • Child and Adolescent Health Service • WA Country Health Service • Health Support Services |

¹ The word Deaf with a capitalised D is used to describe people who use Auslan (Australian sign language) for communication [Terminology For Deafness | Aussie Deaf Kids](#)

| | |
|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PathWest Laboratory Medicine WA • Quadriplegic Centre. |
| Interpreter | A person who conveys a message or statement verbally or by using sign language into another language with accuracy and impartiality to enable effective communication between two or more people who use different languages. |
| Language services | Includes interpreting and translating services to facilitate effective communication between the WA health system staff members and consumers and carers who have limited English proficiency and people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. |
| Qualified and credentialed interpreters and translators | <p>The <i>Western Australian Language Services Policy 2020</i> recognises that an interpreter or translator may have obtained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tertiary qualifications and/or • credentials issued by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). <p>Ideally, practitioners will have both tertiary qualifications and NAATI credentials.</p> <p>For languages of some Aboriginal and new and emerging communities, NAATI recognition or, in the case of Aboriginal interpreters, registration with Aboriginal Interpreting Western Australia is acceptable.</p> <p>Interpreters and translators engaged in ‘child-related work’ as defined by the <i>Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004</i> must hold a current Working with Children Card before working in the WA Health system.</p> |
| Staff member | <p>Staff member means a person</p> <p>(a) employed in a health service provider by an employing authority pursuant to the <i>Health Services Act 2016</i> and includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the chief executive of the health service provider; (ii) a health executive employed in the health service provider; (iii) a person employed in the health service provider under section 140 of the <i>Health Services Act 2016</i>; (iv) a person seconded to the health service provider under section 136 or 142 of the <i>Health Services Act 2016</i>; <p>(b) a person engaged under a contract for services by a health service provider pursuant to the <i>Health Services Act 2016</i>;</p> <p>(c) employed in the Department of Health by or under an employing authority pursuant to the <i>Public Sector Management Act 1994</i>.</p> |
| System Manager | The term used for the Department CEO to reflect their role as being responsible for overall management of the WA health system (see s.19 <i>Health Services Act 2016</i>). |
| Translator | A person who makes a written transfer of a message or |

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| | statement from one language into another with accuracy and impartiality to enable effective communication between two or more people who use different languages. |
| WA health entities | WA health entities include: (i) health service providers as established by an order made under section 32 (1)(b) of the <i>Health Services Act 2016</i> . (ii) Department of Health as an administrative division of the State of Western Australia pursuant to section 35 of the <i>Public Sector Management Act 1994</i> . |
| WA health system | The WA health system is comprised of: (i) the Department of Health (ii) health service providers (iii) contracted health entities, to the extent they provide health services to the State. |

8. Policy Contact

Enquiries relating to this Policy may be directed to:

Title: Director

Directorate: Chronic Disease Prevention, Public and Aboriginal Health Division

Email: culturaldiversity@health.wa.gov.au

9. Document Control

| Version | Published date | Effective from | Review date | Amendment(s) |
|--|----------------|----------------|-------------|--|
| MP 0051/17 | 3 April 2017 | 3 April 2017 | April 2022 | Original version |
| MP 0051/17 v.2.0 | 6 April 2023 | 6 April 2023 | April 2026 | Policy review and amendments as below. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of the state government WA Language Services Policy 2020 in the Purpose section to ensure alignment. Applicability section amended to WA health entities – inclusion of Department of Health. Policy Requirements and Compliance Monitoring sections refined. Inclusion of related documents: Language Services Procedure, Language Services Annual Report Template and the Language Services eLearning module. Inclusion of supporting information document: Language Services Guidelines. Inclusion of definitions for 'staff member', 'system manager', 'contracted health entity' and 'WA health entities'. | | | | |
| MP 0051/17 v.2.1 | 2 May 2023 | 2 May 2023 | April 2026 | Minor amendment as detailed below. |
| Insertion of supporting information document 'Decision making tree for engaging an interpreter'. | | | | |
| MP 0051/17 v.2.2 | 11 July 2023 | 11 July 2023 | April 2026 | Minor amendments as listed below. |

- Inclusion of additional question in Data Sources section of related document 'Language Services Annual Reporting Template'.
- Supporting information documents: 'Language Services Guidelines' and 'Decision making tree for engaging an interpreter' – minor amendments.

10. Approval

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Approval by | Dr David Russell-Weisz, Director General, Department of Health |
| Approval date | 24 March 2017 |

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

© Department of Health 2023

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.
