

A Quick Guide to Language Needs Assessments

Steps in Completing a Language Needs Assessment:

A LNA is an analysis, in writing, of the languages and cultures present in the hospital's service area. When developing a LNA:

1. Create a demographic profile of the hospital service area.
 - Identify commonly encountered languages, country of origin, and emerging populations.
 - Consult a variety of federal, state and community sources (*See Recommended Data Sources, p. 20*).
2. Create an internal profile of who uses the hospital.
 - Identify which populations in the service area are using the hospital and their frequency of use.
 - Compare hospital patient data with community demographics to see if the populations "match."
 - Assess the importance of determined programs for each population.
3. Detail existing interpreter services and use data to set benchmarks for improvement in LEP services and toward eliminating health disparities.
 - Use data to prioritize objectives, outreach, and programs and to allocate resources.
 - Assess progress, anticipate and respond to the needs of constituents.
 - Link LNA data to quality indicators and initiatives.
 - Share data with MDPH, community leaders, management, and boards.

A LNA should answer the following questions:

1. What language groups are found in the hospital's service area?
 - What cultures do they represent?
 - Are new linguistic groups entering the communities?
2. Which populations in the service area frequent the hospital?

3. Which populations most often request interpreter services? Are there populations in need of interpreter services but not requesting those services?
4. Which populations in the service area are not accessing services in the hospital?
5. How does the Interpreter Services Department best meet the needs of each linguistic group?
 - Is there a gap between the needs of identified populations and services offered by the hospital?
 - Will emerging LEP groups require interpreter services in the future? Will interpreters be available to meet this need?
 - What knowledge does medical staff need to acquire to better serve these groups?
6. What is needed to improve the overall level of Interpreter Services system functioning?
 - What are the priority needs?
 - What changes would have the greatest positive impact in meeting the needs of the target population?
 - What resources are available to meet these needs?
7. What outreach activities need to occur to ensure that these groups know that interpreter services are available at no cost?