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Limited English Proficiency Participants

Overview

Introduction

Meeting the health and nutrition needs of diverse populations will enhance our efforts of eliminating racial and ethnic disparities by increasing access to WIC services. Local WIC agencies are encouraged to implement strategies to provide effective service to those with limited English proficiency (LEP).

Note: Recipients of U.S. Department of Health and Human Service funds must have policies on providing effective service to those with LEP in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 65 Federal Regulation 52761.

Definition of Limited English Proficiency

A participant with limited English proficiency cannot speak, read, write or understand the English language at a level that permits them to interact effectively with health care providers and social service agencies.

Policy

To ensure meaningful access, WIC agencies are encouraged to take steps to provide language assistance to LEP participants that result in accurate and effective communication. This is to be provided at no cost to the participant.

Assessing Language Assistance Needs

Local WIC agencies should regularly assess the language needs of participants in their service delivery area and determine appropriate measures to meet the language needs of LEP participants. Decisions about the extent of language assistance provided should consider the following factors:

- The types and number of languages spoken,
- The size of the LEP population,
- The size of the clinic,
- Staffing and other resources available, and
- The frequency in which WIC agencies come into contact with LEP persons.

Note: To assist with this determination, agencies are encouraged to review the Community Health Needs Assessment and Health Improvement Plans for each county in their service delivery area.

Overview, Continued

Options for Providing Language Assistance

Local WIC agencies have several options for meeting the language needs of LEP participants including:

- Hiring bilingual staff who are trained and competent in the skill of interpreting,
- Contracting with an interpreter service for trained and competent interpreters,
- Formally engaging community volunteers who are trained and competent in the skill of interpreting,
- Enrolling WIC staff in language classes,
- Utilizing a telephone interpreter service, and
- Providing forms, education and audiovisual materials to WIC participants in other languages.

Using Interpreters

Overview

The extent interpreters are used will depend upon the LEP participant needs within a service delivery area. Hiring bilingual staff is optimal for agencies that regularly provide WIC services to LEP participants. Using contracted interpreters, volunteers or a telephone interpreter service is appropriate for the occasional LEP participant. Regardless of the extent interpreters are used, WIC agencies need to identify interpreters who are trained and demonstrate competence and understand their obligation to maintain participant confidentiality.

Untrained Interpreters

Using untrained interpreters can decrease the quality of services and increase the risk of providing information that is misunderstood. However, there may be times when untrained interpreters are the only option for communicating with LEP participants.

Who is an Untrained Interpreter?

Adult family members, friends and staff members are considered to be untrained interpreters. **Children should not be used as interpreters as it may obstruct the flow of sensitive and confidential information.**

Establish Ground Rules

Establish ground rules with the interpreter before meeting with the client. This will help ensure that the interpreter is a bridge for communication. Ask the interpreter to:

- Sit by the client's side and a bit behind the client.
- Interpret as closely to verbatim as possible and to interpret everything you say.
- Avoid side conversations with the provider or the client.
- Just interpret. It is inappropriate for the interpreter to offer advice or opinion.
- Provide any insights into cultural meaning of the client's responses as appropriate.

Tips for the WIC Provider

The following tips will help the WIC provider keep control of the interview and discussion with the client.

- Set up a pre-session with the interpreter before seeing the client.
- Speak to the client, not the interpreter.
- Use short sentences.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Limit the use of medical terminology or WIC terminology.
- Check for understanding by asking questions of the client.

Reference

Communicating Effectively Through an Interpreter is a video from the Cross Cultural Health Care Program. The video can be obtained at www.xculture.org.

Using Translated Materials

Written Materials

Local WIC agencies should provide culturally relevant materials in languages other than English when a significant percentage of the participants served require information in a language other than English to communicate effectively. Materials with several graphics may be beneficial for LEP participants who are not be able to read the language they speak. Options for providing written materials to a non-English speaking audience include:

- Using or adapting translated materials already available,
- Developing original materials in cooperation with a translator, or
- Translating English language materials in cooperation with a translator.

Broadcast Materials

Television and radio media would be beneficial for advertising WIC services in communities with non-English speaking populations. Ask current WIC participants or staff members who are familiar with the targeted ethnic group for guidance on which media are most often used by the targeted group. Be sure the announcer speaks the language fluently that is to be used.

All advertisements for employment must carry an equal employment opportunity statement. All qualified persons must receive consideration for employment.

Tips for developing and using translated materials for LEP participants:

- Check with the state WIC office to determine existing availability or opportunity for collaboration on the project depending upon interest and need for the materials.
- Use a trained bilingual material specialist to develop or translate materials. Computerized translation programs may not be accurate or culturally appropriate.
- When possible, include both the English version and the translated version in one document.
- Review translated materials for currency and accuracy of the content and the accuracy of the translation before providing them to WIC participants. If possible, include bilingual professionals representing other disciplines in the review.
- Pilot test translated materials with WIC participants, make revisions, and have the materials reviewed again by a translator.
- As a final check on the accuracy of the translation, have another translator translate the final version back into English to determine accuracy of the translation.
- Identify the source on translated materials that were adapted.

Resources

The following resources are available to assist with translating materials.

Resource	Address
Developing and Language Assistance Plan	www.lep.gov
Multi-Lingual Health Education Net	http://www.healthliteracy.worlded.org/
Diversity Rx	www.diversityrx.org