

Frequently Asked Questions for CareOregon Advantage Providers



Why is CareOregon Advantage making changes to the interpreter services?

CareOregon Advantage envisions that all members are connected to health in their preferred language. We strive to achieve that vision by dismantling structural barriers through three areas of focus, which are:

1. Ensure appropriate utilization in all areas of access, including but not limited to:
 - a. **All service sites.** Examples: physical, oral and behavioral health visits, transportation services, CareOregon programs
 - b. **All communication methods, in any language and any format.** Examples: written communications in large-print or Braille, oral communications in-person or audio
2. Ensure the interpreter network meets the needs of CareOregon Advantage members in both quality and capacity.
3. Ensure CareOregon Advantage has a feedback mechanism so members and providers utilizing language services have a voice in process and quality improvement.

The changes being made are in service to this vision.

What has changed with our interpreting services vendors, and how does it impact me?

In 2021, CareOregon started a Request for Proposal (RFP) process for interpreting services. **Our goal was to enter into new contracts that would provide more demanding quality and accountability standards.** After a very competitive RFP process, contracts were awarded to five local interpreting vendors. Contracts are in force as of April 1, 2022. Three of our previous five vendors were awarded contracts, and two new vendors have joined as service providers.

CareOregon continues to contract with CLI (telephonic only), IRCO and Linguava. Our new vendors are National Interpreter Services and Oregon Certified Interpreters Network.

CareOregon will pay for services with Passport to Languages through 6/30/22. For visits scheduled before 6/30/22, CareOregon will continue to pay for visits that occur through 9/30/22.

How is CareOregon preparing for House Bill (HB) 2359?

CareOregon has a multi-pronged approach to supporting clinics as they work to meet the requirements of HB 2359, which requires health care providers to work with interpreters from OHA's health care interpreter registry. Our approach includes:

- ▶ **Scholarships for staff interpreters at clinics and community partners that serve CareOregon members.** In 2022 and 2023, CareOregon is funding at least 80 scholarships with the Oregon Health Care Interpreters Association (OHCA) for clinic staff to become certified or maintain their interpreter certification. More details about who is eligible and how to apply can be found at ohcia.org/careoregon
- ▶ **Value-based Contracts with five language service providers.** CareOregon's contracts for interpreter services incentivize interpreters to meet metrics for the percent of visits filled; the percent of visits filled with a certified or qualified interpreter; and the satisfaction of the member, provider and interpreter. CareOregon is asking vendors to fill 60% of visits with certified or qualified interpreters by the end of 2022, and we will progressively increase that percentage in the years following.
- ▶ **Investing in interpreters.** CareOregon contracts require language service vendors to invest a designated percentage of the fee-for-service rate in the interpreter network through targeted projects and initiatives aimed at incentivizing interpreters to get certified

How can I access interpreting services for CareOregon Advantage members?

Contact one of our vendors to schedule an interpreter. You may first need to set up an account with the vendor. See this handout on our website for contact information, scheduling tips and information on best practices:

link.careoregon.org/how-to-schedule-interpreting

What are interpreting services?

Interpreting is a resource for people who cannot communicate with each other due to a language barrier. An interpreter is a person who joins an encounter as a third party to relay spoken or signed language between two or more individuals. At CareOregon Advantage, we mostly access interpreting services to communicate with members who primarily communicate in languages other than English.

When should I access interpreting services?

Access interpreting services any time you need to communicate with a member who has an “interpreter flag” or has requested to communicate in a language other than English. **We want our members to access their services and benefits, and we know some members are unable to do so without language assistance.** For that reason, we encourage you to remind all members who might benefit that interpreting services are available 24/7, and at no cost them.

What are the different interpreting modalities?

Interpreting services can be offered in person or remotely. The ideal modality for your encounter will vary.

- ▶ **In-person interpreting**, which must be scheduled in advance, is the preferred modality for most in-person encounters. In-person interpreters follow all CareOregon Advantage health and safety guidelines and display their interpreter identification at all times.
- ▶ **Remote modalities** include scheduled and on-demand telephonic and video interpreting. These modalities are more accessible for in-person encounters that:
 - o Take place after hours.
 - o Are for languages that are rare in our community.
 - o Are for situations where the member might prefer not having an additional person physically present.

Additionally, remote interpreters are conveniently available to help you make phone calls and leave voicemail messages. They can also be conferenced into calls as needed.

What should I know before working with an on-demand remote interpreter?

Here are a few tips to help you prepare for an on-demand session:

- ▶ The interpreter will provide an identification number. Be ready to write that down for documentation purposes.
- ▶ The encounter will be more successful if you provide the interpreter with a few details such as the setting, purpose and any pertinent background information.
- ▶ If you experience any issues with sound or clarity, or if the member and interpreter can't seem to understand each other, tell the member to stay on the call, then conference in a different interpreter. You may want to explain to the member that you switched the interpreter for an improved experience.

What should I know before working with a scheduled remote or in-person interpreter?

Here are a few tips to help you prepare for a scheduled session:

- ▶ **An interpreted encounter requires more time.** Keep this in mind as you schedule.
- ▶ Schedule the interpreter to arrive ahead of the start of the clinical encounter if you anticipate the member might need assistance with check-in.
- ▶ The member might prefer working with a specific gender, or they may have a need for a specific dialect. When you set up the appointment, please let the scheduler know of any preferences. The scheduler may not be able to accommodate all preferences but will try.

What should I expect when I work with a professional interpreter?

A professional interpreter is trained to use their language expertise and specialized skills to help individuals overcome language barriers. They follow a profession-specific code of ethics and standards of practice. You can find those references online:

Code of Ethics: [link.careoregon.org/code-of-ethics](https://www.careoregon.org/code-of-ethics)

Standards of Practice: [link.careoregon.org/standards-of-practice](https://www.careoregon.org/standards-of-practice)

Below are some helpful tips to keep in mind when working with a professional interpreter:

- ▶ **It is helpful to have a brief huddle with the interpreter before the encounter** to inform them of the purpose of the encounter.
- ▶ Interpreters will likely wait until an individual finishes a complete thought to jump in with the interpreted message. The interpreter will rely on their memory or note-taking skills to capture everything that is communicated. Be patient if the encounter takes longer. It's helpful to formulate your message in short but complete thoughts.
- ▶ The interpreter will speak in first person. **Speak directly to the member.** Find out what's important to them or what they have understood by asking the member directly rather than asking the interpreter's opinion.
- ▶ **Interpreters strive to interpret everything that is said without inserting personal assumptions or opinions.** This means they will not finesse or filter information, they will interpret background noise and side conversations, and they will not take it upon themselves to change the tone or level of the language. Use plain language, and avoid saying anything you don't want repeated to the member. Do not take offense if the interpreter repeats anything that sounds unprofessional.
- ▶ **Interpreters want to serve all parties equally.** They are not responsible for explaining medical or insurance concepts, cannot be expected to know another person's culture and values and should not be providing systems navigation beyond interpreting what the words spoken during an encounter. Do not ask the interpreter to have a separate conversation with the member, and avoid leaving the interpreter alone with the member. Also, please do not ask the interpreter to fill out paperwork with the member; instead assist the member directly with the interpreter's support.
- ▶ The interpreter wants to be part of the care team and will welcome an opportunity to share cultural perspectives and ideas; however, these conversations should not take place in the presence of the member and these perspectives should always be verified with the member to ensure it applies to them.
- ▶ **It is also helpful to establish ground rules** at the start of the interpreted encounter so that interpreter, member, and anyone else involved understand the dynamic of an interpreted encounter.

