

Opportunity to Improve Hospital Language Services

The Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems and the Oregon Health Care Quality Corporation are partnering with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's *Aligning Forces for Quality* (AF4Q) initiative on *Improving Language Services* in hospitals. All Oregon hospitals are invited to join in this virtual collaborative; **participation is free.**

As you are aware, all hospitals are required to provide interpreter services to patients who speak limited English, but there is little guidance to hospitals on the most effective, efficient ways to implement these requirements. Hospitals are attempting to meet the requirements in a variety of ways – but are doing so without federal guidance, uniform standards or agreed-upon systems for assessing the quality of their language services. As patient populations become increasingly diverse, hospital leaders are eager to learn from each other about how to cost-effectively provide high-quality interpreter services to patients with limited English proficiency (LEP), assess their own programs and improve the services they provide.

The Joint Commission recently adopted new standards – which go into effect Jan. 1, 2011 – that address qualifications for language interpreters, identifying and addressing patient communication needs (both spoken and written), collecting language data and providing language services.

Hospitals that participate in the RWJF virtual collaborative will receive 18-months of expert consultation, coaching and tools to help better screen their patients for preferred spoken and written language, and efficiently meet the language needs of their patients. Hospitals will also make sure that all their LEP patients receive both initial assessment and discharge instructions – critical communication junctures for ensuring quality outcomes – with the assistance of qualified language services providers.

Performance measures that will be assessed through *Improving Language Services* are:

1. Number of patients receiving language services supported by qualified language services providers;
2. Screening for preferred **spoken** language for health care; and
3. Screening for preferred **written** language for health care.

For additional information, please go to: www.forces4quality.org/hqn or contact Diane Waldo at diane.waldo@oahhs.org or (503) 479-6016

This collaborative opportunity is scheduled to begin in October 2010 with applications due August 31, 2010.

Next steps:

- Visit www.forces4quality.org/hqn to learn more about the Hospital Quality Network
- Sign up online for the informational webinar on July 14, noon – 1:30pm
- Enroll online
- Download the Agreement of Participation following enrollment and get it signed by your hospital CEO