



WA Health System Language Services Policy

1. Purpose

The Western Australian Government endorsed the *Western Australian Language Services Policy 2014* and Guidelines as a commitment to providing accessible and responsive services to all Western Australians. This policy supports Western Australian public sector agencies in developing effective communication between staff and clients to improve service delivery and outcomes for all Western Australians.

The *WA Health System Language Services Policy* (the Policy) applies the State Government's *Western Australian Language Services Policy 2014* to the unique conditions and complexities of the WA health system taking into account specific requirements and risks associated with health care.

The Policy provides guidance to Health Service Provider (HSP) staff about system-wide and professional standards to enable effective communication with consumers and carers and to assist with the management of health, legal and other risks that may arise in the delivery of health services, for example, consent to treatment.

The Policy supersedes Operational Directive 0346/11 *WA Health Language Services Policy*.

The Policy is part of the Communications Policy Framework.

2. Applicability

The Policy is binding on each HSP and contracted health entities to which it applies or relates.

3. Policy requirements

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 English such as some Aboriginal people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people who are Deaf or hard of hearing who communicate in Auslan.

The Policy ensures the provision of interpreting and translating services to facilitate effective and consumer- focussed communication between consumers and carers and HSP staff, and promotes fundamental consumer rights such as access to high quality care, safety, respect, communication and participation.

An accompanying set of *WA health system Language Services Policy Guidelines* provide further information to facilitate implementation of the policy.

3.1 Policy aims

Specifically, the Policy aims to ensure that:

- all consumers and carers who need assistance with English or who are Deaf or hard of hearing are provided with access to appropriate interpreting and translating assistance;
- all HSP staff who deal with consumers and carers have the knowledge and skills to assess the need for language assistance and to engage appropriate interpreting and translating services; and
- there are suitable procedures and processes in place to enable appropriate and timely engagement of interpreters and translators, particularly for health situations that have health, legal or other risks for consumers, HSPs or the WA health system.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities

HSPs and CEs are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy.

4. Compliance, monitoring and evaluation

HSPs are required to report annually to the System Manager on the performance indicators as follows:

- number of interpreters engaged annually by HSPs, identified by language;
- full cost spent annually on interpreters engaged by HSPs, identified by language;
- number of translators engaged annually by HSP, identified by language;
- full cost spent annually on translators engaged by HSPs, identified by language; and
- number of HSP staff that have participated in cultural awareness/language services training annually.

The System Manager has a role in the evaluation of the Policy through the collection of annual data against performance indicators developed to measure compliance with the policy requirements.

The Cultural Diversity Unit, Chronic Disease Prevention Directorate, Public Health Division, Department of Health is responsible for the collection of data from HSPs, and will review and submit this information to the System Manager.

5. Supporting Information

The following document and web-based resources support and inform the implementation of the mandatory requirements:

- *WA health system Language Services Policy Guidelines*
- <http://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Health-for/Health-professionals/Multicultural-health>

6. Definitions

The following definitions are relevant to this Policy.

Term	Definition
Auslan	Australian sign language is a recognised language used by the Australian Deaf community.
Carers	A person is a carer for the purposes of the <i>Carer's Recognition Act 2004</i> if

	<p>he or she is an individual who provides 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.
Emergency	An unforeseen occurrence; a sudden and urgent occasion for action.
Health service provider	<p>This is an entity established by an order made under Section 32 (1) (b) of the <i>Health Services Act 2016</i> and may include :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Metropolitan Health Service (NMHS); • South Metropolitan Health Service (SMHS); • East Metropolitan Health Service (EMHS); • Child and Adolescent Health Service (CAHS); • WA Country Health Service (WACHS); • Quadriplegic Centre; and • Health Support Services (HSS).
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 parties who use different languages.
Language services	Includes interpreting and translating services to facilitate effective communication between the WA health system staff 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</i> recognises that an interpreter or translator may have obtained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • university qualifications in interpreting or translating - for example, a bachelor’s degree - or vocational education and training ((VET) qualifications from a State training provider (such as a TAFE college) – for example, a diploma; and/or • certification issued by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). <p>Ideally, practitioners will have both qualifications and NAATI certification.</p> <p>For languages of some Aboriginal and new and emerging communities, a</p>

	<p>tertiary qualification or NAATI certification may not be available. In such cases, interpreters or translators may have received NAATI recognition or, in the case of Aboriginal interpreters, be registered with the Kimberley Interpreting Service.</p> <p>The qualification and certification levels will reflect interpreters' and translators' skills at different levels of complexity.</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> <p>Qualified and credentialed interpreters and translators must adhere to a professional code of ethics such as that of the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators, Inc. (AUSIT), the Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (ASLIA) and the Western Australian Public Sector Code of Ethics.</p>
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 parties who use different languages.
WA health system	The WA health system comprises the Department of Health, health service providers (NMHS, SMHS, CAHS, WACHS, EMHS, Quadriplegic Centre and HSS) and to the extent that contracted health entities provide health services to the State.

7. Policy owner

Assistant Director General Public Health

Enquiries relating to this policy may be directed to:
CulturalDiversity.RoyalSt@health.wa.gov.au

8. Review

This mandatory policy will be reviewed as required to ensure relevance and recency. At a minimum it will be reviewed within 5 years after first issue and at least every 5 years thereafter.

Version	Effective from	Effective to	Amendment(s)
MP 0051/17 v. 1.0	03 April 2017	03 April 2022	Original version

The review table indicates previous versions of the mandatory document and any significant changes.

9. Approval

This mandatory policy has been approved and issued by the Director General of the Department of Health.

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