

Quick Tips for the Dental Office



Offering Interpreter Services

Americans with Disabilities Act (AwDA)



The AwDA requires that a dentist retain and pay for the services of an interpreter, if an interpreter is needed to achieve effective communication with a patient. In some instances,

patients may provide their own interpreter, such as a family member or an interpreter that is with the patient on a daily basis. However, if a patient does not provide their own interpreter, it is the dentist's responsibility to provide one for the patient. There are other appropriate methods that can be used to achieve effective communication with a patient, including listening devices, note taking and written materials.

The AwDA does not require any aid that would result in an undue financial burden or in a fundamental alteration in the nature of the services provided by the dentist; however, this does not relieve the dentist from the duty to provide alternate aid for hearing impaired or other special needs patients. Dentists need to assess a patient's needs on a case-by-case basis to determine the appropriate method of communication to be used.



Section 1557

A dental practice may also be required to provide interpreter or translator services if they are covered under *Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act*, which protects individuals from discrimination in health care on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. A dental practice must comply with Section 1557 if it receives certain government funds including:

- Reimbursements under Medicaid or CHIP
- Reimbursement under Medicare Advantage plans (Medicare Part C)
- “Meaningful Use” payments

“Meaningful Use” payments are received through the *Medicaid Electronic Health Record (EHR) Incentive Program*, which provides incentive payments to eligible professionals to adopt, implement, upgrade or “meaningfully use” EHR technology.

Covered dental practices are required to take appropriate steps to ensure that communications with individuals with limited English proficiency (who are likely to be encountered) or disabilities are as effective as communications with others. This includes the use of qualified interpreters and translators when necessary.

Offering Interpreter Services, cont'd

Tips for Working Effectively with Interpreters:

CyraCom Interpretation, which is endorsed by the American Dental Association (ADA) offers the following tips for working effectively with an interpreter in your practice:



- Provide the interpreter with a brief explanation of what you need to achieve during your conversation with the patient
- Speak directly to your patient and make eye contact, even though you are waiting for the interpreter to interpret
- Use short, but complete, phrases. Remember that the interpreter needs to process two languages
- Speak in the first person
- Avoid slang, jargon or metaphors
- Allow the interpreter to clarify linguistic and cultural issues
- Be patient! It may take some time, but the clear communication will be worth it.

CyraCom's interpreters complete 120-hour certification courses and specialize in healthcare interpreting, including a focus on dental terms, and is endorsed by ADA Business Resources.

More information may be found here: <https://www.adamemberadvantage.com/en/endorsed-programs/top-10-languages>.

If you have any questions about your responsibilities to provide interpreter services, please contact the PDA Central Office at 800-223-0016.