A. SUBJECT: Language Assistance Services

B. EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2005 (R)

C. POLICY:

All Medical Center employees and all healthcare practitioners providing services at the Medical Center shall recognize the language assistance needs of patients and obtain language assistance for those patients in need. The Medical Center shall arrange and provide language assistance services that enable limited-English speaking patients (LEP) to communicate their symptoms, concerns, and questions, as well as comprehend their treatment plan presented by their health care practitioners.

The Medical Center shall provide, free of charges, 24-hour access to interpretive services (in-person, telephonic, or electronic) for all limited-English speaking patients (LEP) in a manner consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. All limited-English speaking patients shall be informed of these services.

Medical Center employees and all health care practitioners providing services at the Medical Center shall not encourage the use of a patient’s relative or family member as an interpreter of healthcare information. A patient’s relative or friend shall be used as an interpreter only at the request of the patient and only if the use will not compromise the effectiveness of the medical services provided or jeopardize the patient’s privacy regarding sensitive medical information. Use of minor children as interpreters is prohibited, even if such use is the patient’s preference.

The Medical Center shall ensure that vital documents that are routinely provided to patients in the English language are made available in other regularly encountered languages as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
D. PROCEDURE:

1. Interpretive Services

   a. Scheduling Interpretive Services: Patient Access staff shall ask the individual who is scheduling a patient for service about the patient’s need for interpretive services. Patient Access staff shall indicate the specific language interpretive services needed for limited-English speaking patients in the Resource Scheduling System (Special Needs Flag) at the time that the patient is scheduled for service. The Language Assistance Services staff shall review each scheduled request and to determine how the interpretive services will be provided. Language Assistance Services staff shall notify the scheduled clinic/service as to the type of interpretive service to be provided (in-person, telephonic, electronic) prior to the patient’s scheduled appointment.

   b. Non-scheduled Interpretive Services: Interpretive services for limited-English speaking patients that have not been previously scheduled for such service shall be requested by calling Language Assistance at 982-1794. Medical Center clinical units/departments/services that have access to approved telephonic (CyraCom) or electronic (MedBridge) interpretive devices may utilize such devices as necessary.

   c. Medical Center employees and all health care practitioners providing services at the Medical Center shall document in the patient’s medical record the description of the interpretive service required for each patient, and the source from which the services were obtained.

2. Translation Services:

   a. To access existing vital documents that have been transcribed and approved for distribution to limited-English speaking patients, contact Language Assistance Services at 982-1794 or visit the Health System website at http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/intranet/language/.

   b. For all other inquiries pertaining to translation services, contact Language Assistance Services at 982-1794.