Did You Know?

• Almost 45 million Americans spoke a language other than English at home in 2002.
• Many Americans are Limited English Proficient (LEP) meaning they are unable to speak, read, write or understand the English language at a level that permits them to interact effectively with health and social services agencies and providers.
• The Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) population includes more than 49 different ethnic groups speaking over 100 different languages and dialects.
• 76% of Hmong, 70% of Cambodians, 68% of Laotians, 61% of Vietnamese, 52% of Koreans, 51% of Chinese, 39% of Tongans, and 22% of Samoans are LEP.

With respect to health care, Limited English Proficient patients:

• Are less likely to be given follow-up appointments than English-speaking patients.
• Are 3.24 times less likely to take prescribed medication, and 3.06 times less likely to appear for follow-up appointments.
• Will use fewer preventative services, such as mammograms and cervical screening, and often will have little knowledge of the purpose of or need for these services.
• Are less likely to participate in health care programs in which they are eligible.

Not providing adequate services for LEP patients means:

• You are violating their basic civil rights under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
• LEP patients are less likely to receive preventative care or early treatment for chronic diseases, which often results in greater health care costs.
• There is an increased chance of misunderstanding and miscommunication between patient and doctor.
• Patient-doctor communication is less reliable as LEP patients may not be as forthright about sensitive medical issues.
• Healthcare providers may be unable to obtain truly informed consent from a patient, increasing the risk of medical malpractice.

To address this important issue, AAPCHO urges Congress to:

• Pass legislation requiring the collection of Primary Language Data so we can better understand and address the needs of LEP patients.
• Commit to the goal of eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in health care, including disparities caused by language.
• Commit to ensuring access to health care for all Americans by making the provision of language services a priority, and by providing adequate funding to compensate providers for this service.