



AAPCHO

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Limited English Proficiency

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations

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.