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## **North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization, LLC**

Section 1500 - Clinical: Translation and Interpretation Services

Authorizing Source: HCA Contract

Approved by: Executive Director    Date: 5/13/2025    Signature:

### **POLICY # 1515.00**

### **SUBJECT: TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION SERVICES**

#### **PURPOSE**

North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services (North Sound BH-ASO) will assure that individuals receiving Crisis Services and non-Medicaid Behavioral Health Services will have access to oral interpretation services and written translation of materials in their preferred language other than English.

#### **POLICY**

North Sound BH-ASO will assure that contracted Behavioral Health Agencies (BHA) provide equal access for all Individuals when oral or written language creates a barrier to such access. BHA's are required to utilize qualified interpreters as described by Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act for reimbursable services. .

#### **PROCEDURES**

1. Oral Information:

BHA's will assure that interpreter services are provided for Individuals with a preferred language other than English, free of charge. Interpreter services include the provision of interpreters for Individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired at no cost to the Individual, including American Sign Language (ASL). Interpreter services will be provided for all interactions between such Individuals and North Sound BH-ASO or any of its providers including, but not limited to:

- a. Customer service;
- b. All appointments with any provider for any covered service; and
- c. All steps necessary to file Grievances and Appeals.

2. Written Information:

North Sound BH-ASO will assure that BHA's provide all generally available and Individual-specific written materials in a language and format which may be understood by each individual in each of the prevalent languages that are spoken by five percent (5%) or more of the Regional Service Area (RSA) based on information obtained from Health Care Authority (HCA).

For Individuals whose preferred language has not been translated as required in this section, BHA's may meet the requirement of this section by doing any one of the following:

- a. Translating the material into the Individual's preferred reading language;
  - b. Providing the material in an audio format in the Individual's preferred language;
  - c. Having an interpreter read the material to the Individual in the Individual's preferred language;
  - d. Providing the material in another alternative medium or format acceptable to the Individual.
- The BHA will document the Individual's acceptance of the material in an alternative medium or format in the Individual's record; or

- e. Providing the material in English, if the BHA documents the Individual's preference for receiving material in English.
3. North Sound BH-ASO will ensure that all BH-ASO and BHA written information provided to Individuals is accurate, is not misleading, is comprehensible to its intended audience, is designed to provide the greatest degree of understanding, is written at the sixth (6th) grade reading level and fulfills other requirements of the Contract as may be applicable to the materials.
4. HCA may make exceptions to the sixth grade reading level when, in the sole judgment of HCA, the nature of the materials does not allow for a sixth grade reading level or the Individual's needs are better served by allowing a higher reading level. HCA approval of exceptions to the sixth grade reading level must be in writing
5. Educational materials about topics or other information used by BHA's for health promotion efforts must be submitted to HCA, but do not require HCA approval as long as they do not specifically mention the Contracted Services.
6. Educational materials that are not developed by North Sound BH-ASO or by North Sound BH-ASO's Subcontractors are not required to meet the sixth (6th) grade reading level requirement and do not require HCA approval.
7. For Individual-specific written materials, BHA's may use templates that have been pre-approved in writing by HCA. North Sound BH-ASO will provide HCA with a copy of all approved materials in final form.
8. Interpreter services for Individuals in crisis over-the-telephone Reimbursable Services must meet the following criteria:
  - a. The Individuals must be Medicaid eligible on the date the service took place;
  - b. The Individual received a Medicaid covered service by a servicing provider that has a Core Provider Agreement with HCA;
  - c. The Interpretation requests must be for urgent same day events, necessary to assist Individuals determined to be in crisis;
  - d. Services must be provided by a qualified interpreter as described by Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act; and
  - e. The claim must be submitted to HCA within ninety (90) calendar days of the date of service.
9. Payment to interpreters for over-the-phone interpretation will be in accordance with HCA Billing Guides and adhere to the following criteria:
  - a. Reimbursement is per minute and shall not exceed the over-the-phone interpreter rates in accordance with the Language Access Provider (LAP) contract. .A copy of the current agreement may be found on the Office of Financial Management (OFM) website.
  - b. Administrative activities including but not limited to scheduling or reminder calls are not reimbursable.
  - c. Scheduled events, or appointments scheduled more than 24-hours in advance, are not reimbursable thorough this process and must use the HCA Interpreter Services program.
  - d. HCA is not responsible for any unpaid service claims made by the interpreter or the interpreter agency.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

None