Sign Language Interpretation

Page updated: August 2020

This section contains policy related to sign language interpretation services.

**Sign Language Interpreter Overview**

Sign language interpreter services are a benefit to facilitate effective communication with deaf or hearing-impaired Medi-Cal recipients.

The following services are reimbursable:

- Communication between a deaf or hearing-impaired Medi-Cal recipient and a Medi-Cal-enrolled provider during the course of a medically necessary health care examination or other procedure

- Communication between a deaf or hearing-impaired adult representative of the Medi-Cal recipient and a Medi-Cal-enrolled provider when necessary to facilitate medically necessary health services for the recipient

- Communication between a deaf or hearing-impaired adult who receives services or training on behalf of the recipient and the Medi-Cal-enrolled provider who renders the medically necessary health care services to the recipient

**Provider Guidelines**

Sign language interpreter services are reimbursable only to providers or provider groups employing fewer than 15 people.

**Health Facility Limitations**

Sign language interpreter services are not covered for recipients receiving these services in a health facility that is required by law to provide sign language interpreter services.
Interpreter Services Guidelines

Sign language interpreter services as defined in *California Code of Regulations* (CCR), Title 22, Section 51098.5, may be used for, but are not limited to, the following:

- Obtaining medical history
- Obtaining informed consent and permission for treatment
- Explaining diagnosis, treatment and prognosis of an illness
- Communicating prior to, during and after medical procedures
- Providing complex instructions regarding medication
- Explaining instructions for care upon discharge from a medical facility
- Providing mental health assessment, therapy or counseling

The individual providing sign language interpreter services must:

- Not be related to the recipient
- Possess the ability to receive, interpret and communicate information effectively, accurately and impartially in a medical setting, as determined by both the recipient and the provider
- Be non-certified or hold certification by one of the following:
  - The National Registration of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID)
  - The National Association of Deaf (NAD)/California Association of the Deaf (CAD) at competency Level IV or V only
  - The California Department of Rehabilitation at competency Level III and possess a certificate from RID or NAD/CAD at competency Level IV or V only

**Note:** In an emergency or acute care situation, the provider may select the interpreter.
Reimbursable HCPCS Codes

The following HCPCS codes are reimbursable for sign language interpreter services.

Authorization

Authorization is not required.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>HCPCS Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>T1013</td>
<td>Sign language or oral interpretive services, per 15 minutes</td>
<td>Maximum of 32 units billed</td>
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Billing

Providers must document that they employ fewer than 15 employees in the Remarks field (Box 80)/Additional Claim Information field (Box 19) or on a claim attachment. Sign language interpreter services may not be billed using the “from-through” format.

Revenue code 0969 (other professional fees) is used to bill sign language interpreter services. Certified sign language interpreters may bill with modifier HM (less than bachelor degree level).
<<Legend>>

Symbols used in the document above are explained in the following table.>>

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