



**KIT CARSON COUNTY MEMORIAL
HOSPITAL
BURLINGTON, CO
December 2004**

Executive Summary:

Kit Carson County Memorial Hospital serves a community that is approximately 20 percent Spanish-speaking. In order to ensure the best care to all its patients, the hospital strives to eliminate potential language barriers by posting all signs in English and Spanish, providing language translators upon a patient's request or identified need, and translating its documents into Spanish. The hospital also hires bilingual employees when possible, and the majority of the staff is bilingual at its local medical clinic.

Organization Size: 25 beds

Program/Initiative Description:

Enhancement of Spanish Communication: Kit Carson County Memorial Hospital recently translated patient-related documents into Spanish, using a local translator who both understood medical terminology and could also translate the documents into simple, easy-to-understand language. The hospital also posts signs in English and Spanish, and offers Spanish translators to patients with an identified need or who request it. The language translators are employed by the hospital and generally serve on an on-call basis. In addition, the hospital strives to hire bilingual employees when possible. The majority of the staff at the hospital's affiliated medical clinic is bilingual, including its receptionists and physicians.

Establishment of Program/Initiative: 2002

Racial or Ethnic Disparities Problem the Program/Initiative Was Designed to Address:

- The community the hospital serves is approximately 20 percent Spanish-speaking
- The hospital was unaware that many Spanish-speaking patients were paying people to come with them to the hospital to serve as translators

Major Objectives:

- Provide quality health care services to the entire community, including clear communication to the community's Spanish-speaking patients
- Offer Spanish translating services when patients request them, rather than having patients bring their own translator

Significant Results: Spanish-speaking patients are more likely to request a translator rather than hire their own translator from the community

External Partners in the Program/Initiative: None

Limitations or Problems Encountered:

- Finding an organization that could accurately translate medical documents while still keeping them in simple, easy-to-understand language was difficult and expensive. The organization was able to find an individual in the community who translates documents into Spanish and who had an adequate medical background, which helped reduce costs.

- Once the hospital had translated its documents into Spanish, employees then realized that many Spanish-speaking patients are not fully literate in Spanish. Often patients don't understand the paperwork given to them, and it is necessary to bring in a verbal translator to help explain.

Estimated Cost of the Program, To Date: Document translation costs 16-18 cents per word, resulting in an average annual bill of \$1200

Advice to Other Organizations That May Want to Start a Similar Program: Find a local individual who has some medical background and who can also translate the documents into understandable language.

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