



# California Healthcare Interpreters Association

*Supporting and promoting the healthcare interpreting profession by setting standards of excellence that ensures equal access to quality medical care for all people.*

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Monday, March 11, 2002

Karen Coffee, Division Chief  
Personnel Resources and Innovations Division  
California State Personnel Board  
801 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, CA 95814  
P.O. Box 944201, Sacramento, CA 94244-2010

**RE: Medical Interpreter Certification Program (Co-operative Personnel Services)**

Dear Ms. Coffee,

Juana Lopez-Rodriguez, of your Bilingual Services Program area, suggested that we send you this letter introducing ourselves – the California Healthcare Interpreters Association (CHIA) - and formally suggest that your department, which oversees the Medical Interpreter Certification program, establish an advisory body for this program.

We would like to suggest creating a broad advisory committee for the Medical Interpreter Certification. Such an advisory body for this certification program might include representation from providers, possibly a representative of the California Medical Association; employers of interpreters, including hospitals and insurers; and training institutions for healthcare interpreters, including post-secondary institutions and training organizations; as well as representation from professional interpreters, through CHIA, and from representative interpreter agencies. This would essentially create, for the medical interpreting field, a professional equivalent to the Judicial Council for court and administrative interpreters.

CHIA is a statewide organization created in 1996 by the directors of medical interpreting at a number of large hospitals across California to support and promote the healthcare interpreting profession. The organization is setting standards of practice for interpreters in order to help ensure equal access to quality medical care for all people. A 501 (c) (3) charity since 1998, CHIA has over 230 individual members across California, 25 organizational members, and chapters in Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay area, Central Valley, and Sacramento, and is developing a chapter in the San Diego area. CHIA works closely with the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC), and with other state organizations such as the Massachusetts Medical Interpreter Association (MMIA) and the Society of Medical Interpreters (SOMI) in Washington State.

CHIA received funding from The California Endowment in 2000 and 2001 to develop healthcare interpreter standards of practice and develop a plan for certifying interpreters

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based on the CHIA standards. The emerging Standards have been developed through a cross-state committee composed of expert interpreters, interpreter trainers, healthcare providers, insurers (Kaiser San Francisco and LA Care Health Plan), and post secondary institutions (San Diego State University). Please see the attached committee list.

These Standards for healthcare interpreters are of necessity different from any standards currently in existence for court and administrative hearing interpreters. The CHIA Standards are available in draft form on our website (<http://www.CHIA.ws>), and will be completed by the end of April 2002. They include ethical principles, procedural protocols of what the interpreter is expected to do before, during and following an interpreted patient/provider interaction, and a discussion of interpreter interventions. We have been considering ways to incorporate the essential elements of CHIA's standards into an updated and revised medical certification and have had some discussion about this with the Department of Consumer Affairs and with the Department of Health Services.

Of course, the matter of reimbursement for medical interpreters is a major consideration. Unlike Washington State, as your report emphasizes, California has no effective reimbursement for medical interpreters as a Medi-Cal or Medicare service. CHIA, in collaboration with some of the community advocacy organizations, such as the National Health Law Program, Health Access, and the Asian Pacific Islander American Health Forum, among others, is also concerned with this matter. Clearly, until such time as medical interpreting is recognized as a legitimate profession through reimbursement dollars, the demand for certification will remain modest, despite the need. An effective, broadly representative certification recognized by all of the parties in the health system, and available in the major languages required by California and Federal legislation, is long overdue.

We look forward to further discussions with your department on this matter.

Best wishes,

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Niels Agger Gupta, PhD.  
CHIA Executive Director  
email: [agger@attglobal.net](mailto:agger@attglobal.net)

c.c.:

Kathleen Hamilton, Director, California Department of Consumer Affairs  
Laura Hardcastle, Chief, Refugee Health Section, California Department of Health Services

Attachment:

**CHIA Board of Directors:**

President & Chair, LA Chapter: **Beverly Treumann**, interpreter, UCLA Medical Center, Los Angeles

Vice-President: **Terecita Bautista**, Manager, Interpreter Services Department, Alameda County Medical Center, Highland Campus, Oakland

Secretary: **Betty Moore**, Program Manager, Healthy House / California Health Collaborative, Merced

Co-Chair, Standards & Certification Committee: **Elizabeth Anh-Dao Nguyen**, Interpreter, Trainer, Management Specialist, Member Services, LA Care Health Plan, Los Angeles;

Co-Chair, Continuing Education Committee: **Berta Alicia Bejarano**, Senior Spanish Interpreter, Richmond Kaiser Permanente, Oakland;

Chair, Chapter Development Committee: **Mary Corroero**, Health Educator /Interpreter, San Mateo County AIDS Program, Fremont;

Chair, Bay Area Chapter: **David Peschard**, Spanish Interpreter & Language Bank Coordinator, Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, Stanford;

Chair, Central Valley Chapter: **Delores LeBoeuf**, Manager, Interpreter Services, Children's Hospital of Central California, Madera;

Representative, Sacramento Chapter: **Tim Keenan**, RN, Sacramento County;

Board member: **Julie Burns**, M.Ed., interpreter, Senior Trainer, "Bridging the Gap" Cross Cultural Health Care Program of Seattle, WA, Sebastopol.

**Standards & Certification Committee Membership:**

Chair: **Ann Chun, MPA**, interpreter trainer; former CHIA Board member; Cultural Access Specialist, Alameda County Children & Families Commission;

Co-Chair: **Elizabeth Nguyen**, interpreter; trainer; CHIA Board member, Management Specialist, LA Care Health Plan, (*formerly* with PALS for Health, Los Angeles);

**Linda Haffner**, interpreter; Co-Chair, National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC), Standards, Certification & Training Committee, *formerly* CHIA President and former Director of Interpreter Services, Stanford Hospital & Clinics, Palo Alto;

**Carola Green**, interpreter; trainer; member (NCIHC) Standards, Certification & Training Committee; Project Coordinator, Vista Community Clinic, *former* CHIA Vice-President; former Team Leader, Interpreter Services, Cedars-Sinai Hospital, Los Angeles;

**Gayle Tang, MSN, RN**; interpreter; Director, National Linguistic & Cultural Services, Kaiser Permanente. Program Office, Oakland;

**Linda Okahara**, Program Director, Asian Health Services, Oakland;

**Marilyn Mochel, RN**; Program Manager, Healthy House Annex/California Healthcare Collaborative, Merced;

**Beatriz Solis, MPH**, Director of Cultural & Linguistic Services, LA Care Health Plan, Los Angeles;

**Claudia Angelelli, PhD**, interpreter; trainer, Assistant Professor, San Diego State University;

**Niels Agger-Gupta, PhD**, Executive Director, California Healthcare Interpreters Association.

**Venus Nasri**, CHIA Administrator.