



CASE STUDY

International Community Health Services Increases Language Access, Improves Data Tracking and Decreases Cost

PROFILE

Location: Seattle and King County, Washington
Number of Locations: 7 medical and dental locations
Number of Exam rooms: 105
Language Needs: 46 languages including Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Korean, Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian, Somali
Number of Healthcare Providers: Over 56 providers

Overview | For more than 40 years, the International Community Health Services (ICHS), a nonprofit community health center, has provided culturally-appropriate and multilingual, affordable medical and dental health care services to Seattle and King County’s Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities, and the broader community. ICHS began in 1973 as a small storefront clinic in Seattle’s International District, and today it is the largest Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community health center in Washington State.

Each year, ICHS provides direct patient care, health support services, and preventive education to more than 21,400 individuals, and in 2012, ICHS was recognized by the National Committee for Quality Assurance as a “patient-centered medical home” for its work in providing team-led, coordinated health care.



The Challenge

Nearly 65 percent of the patient encounters at ICHS are limited English proficiency (LEP) and require interpretation services. To address the high demand for language services, which often included Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, and Vietnamese, ICHS regularly hired on-site interpreters through four different local agencies, which was expensive, as they billed by the hour and required travel fees, and often created patient delays and cancellations.

ICHS also hired bilingual and multilingual staff who were often brought in to interpret for patients and providers, distracting them from their core responsibilities. In addition, ICHS utilized over the phone interpreters (OPI), which were difficult to use in many scenarios, particularly in a dentist's chair, and did not generate positive patient feedback. With such a variety of on-site interpreting agencies, vendors and staff interpreter encounters, ICHS struggled to track the effectiveness of its language service program.

Recently the health center has seen an expanded need for languages such as Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian and Somali, which are not always provided by on-site interpreters and local staff. At this point, administrators realized they needed to come up with a better solution as the current language services mix was not effectively meeting patient and provider needs.



The Solution

ICHS partnered with InDemand Interpreting to resolve a number of objectives. The health center was looking to provide a seamless tracking process for measuring the effectiveness of its language services program throughout its health care and dental clinics, to increase the number of available languages, included American Sign Language (ASL) and to create a more affordable way to coordinate interpreting encounters throughout their clinics.

InDemand satisfied all of these requirements while also offering a responsive support team willing to answer any questions and respond to needs in a timely manner, according to Sherman Lohn, the director of operations for ICCHS.

“We selected InDemand Interpreting as a trusted partner for our health clinics specifically because the interpreters are certified, strictly medical interpreters,” Lohn said. “We were also impressed with the extensive number of languages available through VRI, the company’s willingness to work with our dental clinics and the fact that InDemand Interpreting is a local, Washington company.”



InDemand has partnered with ICCHS to manage the entire language services program, while supporting the team with managing costs and ensuring that every patient has access to a medically trained interpreter when needed. Through the use of VRI, bilingual and multilingual staff and on-site interpreters, ICCHS provides an effective balance of language services to best serve its patients and providers.

“We implemented the new InDemand Clarity software, and we have been impressed with the quality of the high definition video and audio of the VRI in all of our medical and dental clinics,”

—Sherman Lohn, Director of Operations for ICCHS.

The Results

Today the ICHS clinic has implemented a full language services program throughout four medical and dental clinics utilizing 11 VRI carts. When ICHS implemented the VRI service, administrators were unsure if staff would respond positively to the new program, but they have been pleased to see that both providers and patients now request additional opportunities to use the InDemand Clarity VRI due to the quality interpreters, the flexibility of the service and the ability to quickly access a language the patient requests.



“When we opened our Bellevue clinic, we had providers requesting for us to add VRI to the other sites due to the ease of use and the frequent encounters with LEP patients at that location,” said Lohn. “InDemand Interpreting and the VRI services they provide have been a win/win for our organization. The immediate access to medically trained interpreters has made all the difference in our language services program and set us up for success moving forward.” —*Sherman Lohn*