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State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
California Department of Public Health



EDMUND G. BROWN, JR.  
Governor

May 11, 2012

AFL 12-16

**TO:** General Acute Care Hospitals

**SUBJECT:** Language Assistance Services

**AUTHORITY:** Health and Safety Code Section 1259 (c)(2)

This All Facilities Letter (AFL) serves as a reminder to all general acute care hospitals of the provisions contained in Health & Safety Code, Section 1259(c)(2) which require hospitals to submit on an annual basis, a copy of their policy and procedures for providing language assistance services to patients with language or communication barriers to the California Department of Public Health(CDPH).

Specifically, Health and Safety Code Section 1259(c)(2) states:

“(c)To ensure access to health care information and services for limited-English-speaking or non-English-speaking residents and deaf residents, licensed general acute care hospitals shall:

(2) Adopt and review annually a policy for providing language assistance services to patients with language or communication barriers. The policy shall include procedures for providing, to the extent possible, as determined by the hospital, the use of an interpreter whenever a language or communication barrier exists, except where the patient, after being informed of the availability of the interpreter service, chooses to use a family member or friend who volunteers to interpret. The procedures shall be designed to maximize efficient use of interpreters and minimize delays in providing interpreters to patients. The procedures shall ensure, to the extent possible, as determined by the hospital, that interpreters are available, either on the premises or accessible by telephone, 24 hours a day. The hospital shall annually transmit to the state department a copy of the updated policy and shall include a description of its efforts to ensure adequate and speedy communication between patients with language or communication barriers and staff.”

Hospitals should annually submit their policies and procedures to their respective Licensing and Certification District Office. CDPH appreciates your continued cooperation with this

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process. For your convenience, contact information for each District Office may be located using the following link:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/facilities/Pages/LCDistrictOffices.aspx>

Sincerely,

**Original Signed By Debby Rogers**

Debby Rogers, RN, MS, FAEN  
Deputy Director  
Center for Health Care Quality