

Behavioral Health and Interpreter Services

Frequently asked Questions

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Reimbursement

What are the maximum rates we can seek reimbursement for?

The maximum rate for spoken languages will not exceed the [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#) agreed rate of \$39.76 per hour. The maximum rates for American Sign Language (ASL) will not exceed the approved [Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) (ODHH) rate. If a private contracted sign interpreter is not established on the ODHH website, the maximum allowable payment is fifty-five dollars (\$55) per hour.

Are residential treatment facilities (Long-Term Rehabilitation) eligible to receive reimbursement for interpreter services?

Services must be covered under the Health Care Authority's (HCA) Interpreter Services (IS) program in order to receive reimbursement. Inpatient or residential facility services are not covered by the HCA IS program and therefore will not be able to receive reimbursement.


Do we need to request through Universal Language Service before going to a private vendor even if they do not have an interpreter available?

In order to be reimbursed, providers must first request an interpreter through Universal Language Service (Universal), even if you believe one is unavailable. The response is immediate, which will allow you to request through a private agency quickly if one is unavailable through Universal.

Can the provider's staff provide language access services if they are certified through DSHS?

No, due to a conflict of interest, provider staff cannot provide language access services and receive reimbursement from Universal.

We are Private for profit inpatient behavioral health agency. How can we get reimbursed for Interpreter Services?



The HCA IS program does not cover interpreter services in an inpatient setting. Inpatient providers concerned about funding to meet their [Title VI of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964](#) obligations should always be sure to include this consideration when negotiating their rates with their Managed Care Organization (MCO).

HCA IS Program Covered Services

How will we indicate the requested job is for Medicaid and not private? How will Universal know when it is a Medicaid covered service?

You must register for a separate HCA account with Universal for services covered by HCA's IS program. Universal will verify which services are covered prior to and the day of the visit by checking the client's ID. If it is not a covered service, your request will be denied/cancelled, and you will need to re-request the service through your private account with Universal.

Are Interpreter services covered by the HCA IS program for filing grievances?

This is not covered by the HCA IS program as it is an administrative service. However, the organization filing the grievance should already have interpreter services available. For instance, if you file a grievance with an MCO, the MCO will provide an interpreter for the call.

Does the HCA IS program provide interpreters for Ombuds services?

The HCA IS program only provides interpreters for Medicaid clients, who are seeing a Medicaid provider for a Medicaid covered service. Ombuds are responsible for obtaining their own interpreters.

Are clients who have Medicare covered by the HCA IS program? Or if they have a ProviderOne card but are QMB-only?

The HCA IS program only provides interpreters for Medicaid clients, who are seeing a Medicaid provider for a Medicaid covered service. QMB-only, QI-1, and SLMB program recipients are not eligible for interpreter services. Contact [Medicare](#) for information regarding interpreter services for clients with primary coverage through Medicare.

Will Universal provide interpreters to schedule appointments over the phone with the clients?

Administrative tasks, such as calling clients to remind them of their appointment or schedule a new one, are not covered under the HCA'S IS program.

Who is not covered by the HCA IS program?

The HCA IS program only provides interpreters for Medicaid clients, who are seeing a Medicaid provider for a Medicaid covered service. Therefore, anyone who does not have Apple Health Medicaid coverage, or Apple Health clients who are receiving services that are not covered by their benefit service package will not be eligible for an interpreter.

If Universal cancels at the last minute, would a new interpreter be covered?



At any time Universal is unable to provide an interpreter, the provider can choose to request an interpreter through a private agency and follow the reimbursement process.

Does the HCA IS program cover services for over the phone interpretation?

No. At this time, the HCA IS program only offers face-to-face interpretation.

Are interpreter services for behavioral health providers serving nursing home clients covered by the HCA IS program?

Yes, as long as these requests are scheduled the same way as office appointments. The provider will need to coordinate with the nursing facility for building access, etc. The nursing home, however, will not be able to request interpreters for providers who visit the facilities.

Are interpreters for group services covered by the HCA IS program?

Each interpreter must be assigned to a specific Medicaid eligible client. If that client is a part of a group, that service will be covered so long as the interpreter is only interpreting for that specific Medicaid eligible client.

Does the HCA IS program cover services for first-time assessment paperwork for the client?

Administrative tasks, such as paperwork, are not covered under the HCA'S IS program.

You will need to make two separate requests in these cases. One request for the private agency interpreter service for administrative work, which the provider will be responsible for payment, and another through Universal for the actual office visit with the provider.

Billing

Do providers need to submit any documentation for services provided by Universal?

Universal is responsible for checking client eligibility and direct payment to interpreters. It is the responsibility of the providers to check the interpreter in and out for each appointment and to submit the correct documentation for reimbursement to Universal.

If the service is provided by Universal, no billing is sent to the MCO for these services?

Correct, HCA pays for the covered interpreter services directly, through ProviderOne. The MCO is not involved in this process.

If I schedule an interpreter and the client does not show up, am I charged?

No, HCA is responsible for paying interpreters in this situation, which is stipulated in the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Providers are not responsible for this cost.

If Universal is unable to provide an interpreter and we must use another vendor, will the HCA IS program cover transportation/mileage?





For Spoken Languages, interpreter travel time is not covered under the HCA IS program, nor is it reimbursed if you use another vendor. However, Interpreter travel time is covered for ASL interpreters and can be reimbursed.

Registration/Account

Does each requester need to register with Universal, or just one person from the agency?

Each agency must register and set up an account with Universal. Each agency can designate multiple people to be authorized to request interpreters. Visit [Universal's FAQ](#) for more information on how to add additional users.

Can the person requesting services be just a staff member of the agency or does the clinician have to submit the request?

Anyone at the agency who is an authorized requestor may request an interpreter. Each agency must register and set up an account with Universal, as well as designate which individuals will be authorized to request interpreters.

Who should we be contacting when we need help with our Universal account?

Please contact Universal directly at accounts@ulsonline.net or call 1 (888) 462-0500 for assistance with your account.

Universal is already our vendor. Do we need to register with them in order for us to be covered? Will this affect or cancel our private contract with Universal?

You will need to register with Universal to setup an HCA account even if you are already using them for services paid by Apple Health clients' Behavioral Health Organization (BHO) coverage or any other kind of coverage.

Your private contract with Universal, however, will be unaffected and can be used for other services.

Can there be an "administrator" from our agency who can add or edit individual requestors?

No, changes or edits to any requestors must be submitted to the [accounts department](#) at Universal.

General Questions



When a region changes from BHO to Managed Care, are we going to see any kind of change in coverage? Such as certain plan types?

No, Apple Health is only changing the payer from BHO to MCO, and our clients will see no change in what specific services are covered, both in their physical and behavioral health coverage.

Do we need to try to re-negotiate with our current vendors for the times that Universal won't be able to provide service?

Providers and their private interpreter agencies are responsible for negotiating rates outside of the HCA-Universal contract.

Is there a maximum/cap for services per client or per time period?

There is no maximum or cap. Interpreter services are always allowed for Medicaid clients, who are seeing a Medicaid provider for a Medicaid covered service.

What is the required/recommended timeframe to submit requests for service to Universal?

Requests can be made at any time. It is recommended to submit your request as early as possible to allow time for interpreters to accept the appointment as their schedules fill up fast. You may choose to receive automated notifications 24 and 72 hours after your request is made, and 14 days, 3 days, and 10 hours prior to the start time. You can also view the live status of your request anytime on your Universal online scheduling platform.

What happens if an appointment runs over the scheduled time?

If the interpreter is asked by an authorized requestor, an interpreter may choose, but not be required, to stay beyond the scheduled end time of an appointment.

If an interpreter arrives to the appointment 30 minutes early, are they eligible for payment for the additional 30 minutes?

Unless the provider, client, and interpreter agree to start earlier than the scheduled time, the interpreter is not eligible to be paid for the time they arrived early.

Would we be able to request specific interpreters to keep continuity for clients?

Specific interpreters may be requested for medically necessary situations. For more information, visit Universal's [FAQ webpage](#).

For intensive mental health programs that offers 24/7 emergency on-call, can we request services after hours if a family wants to contact us?

Yes, universal is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. However, the HCA IS program only covers communication between a provider and client for face to face visits.