

American Sign Language (ASL) and Interpreter Services

Frequently asked Questions

Who is Universal Language Service?

Universal Language Service (Universal) is the contractor that provides interpreter services to Washington State Medicaid eligible clients for Healthcare appointments and Social Service appointments for the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Department of Children, Youth and Family (DCYF) offices.

How do I request interpreters?

In order to request an interpreter through the HCA contractor, you must [register](#) with Universal's online scheduling platform.

The HCA Interpreter Services program is available to healthcare providers serving limited English proficient (LEP), Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Blind Medicaid clients and individuals applying for or receiving DSHS or DCYF services. For more information, visit HCA's [Interpreter Services webpage](#).

Do I have to use Universal?

Yes. HCA will not reimburse for requests that were:

- Not requested first through Universal
- Last minute provider or client cancellation
- Client no-show appointments

The provider is responsible for these services.

Where can I file a complaint or grievance if I encounter problems?

You (or your patients) can visit the following websites for information about how to file a complaint or grievance, including by mail, fax, or email, here:

- www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/non-discrimination-statement
- www.hca.wa.gov/assets/program/65-152.pdf

Can I request an interpreter last minute?

Yes. However, it is best to request an interpreter in advance to allow interpreters the opportunity to review their schedule. Universal cannot guarantee that a last minute request will be filled.


What if Universal cannot provide an ASL Interpreter?

If Universal is unable to fill your request, you may choose another agency to fill the job. Once you have paid that agency, follow instructions under "How do I get reimbursed?"

How do I get reimbursed?

Once you place a request for a sign language interpreter through Universal, you will have the option to receive automated alert emails to when a job is pending. When you receive notification that your job is pending, you can either:

1. Cancel the request for a sign language interpreter and obtain one on your own.; or
2. Leave the request pending with Universal, who will continue to try to fill the request up to the time of service. You will be notified whenever the appointment status changes.
 - You can cancel the request at any time and proceed in obtaining your own sign language interpreter with HCA reimbursement.
 - When cancelling your appointment on the portal, use the cancellation reason "interpreter not found in time".



If you pay for a sign language interpreter outside of the Universal system because no sign language interpreters were available through Universal, you can obtain reimbursement by submitting the following documents to Universal:

1. Copy of paid invoice
2. Job number from Universal
3. Completed [reimbursement voucher](#)
4. W-9 form (one time form)

Once the claim is processed at HCA, Universal will reimburse the provider up to the approved [ODHH](#) rate. If a private contracted ASL or CDI Interpreter is not established on the ODHH website, the maximum allowable payment is fifty-five dollars (\$55) per hour.

You are responsible for the remainder balance.