



Action Request

Maintain interpreter services provided by the State Health Care Authority (HCA), including video interpretation services, to ensure effective delivery of essential services.

Need to Maintain Essential Interpreter Services

As a cost savings measure, the HCA has proposed the elimination of interpreter services.¹ These services are critical for Medicaid eligible, linguistically diverse populations to equitably access essential services, including but not limited to the state-funded Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program.

ESIT Equitably Serves Diverse Families

ESIT engages children ages birth to three with delays or disabilities and their families with coaching, education, therapies and supports. In 2019, ESIT impacted over 5,600 children in King County.

A majority of children who receive ESIT services in King County are children of color. In 2019, 27 percent of children served were from families whose home language was other than English.²

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C requires ESIT services to be conducted in the native language of the child.³ Further, King County seeks to provide culturally and linguistically relevant services, improve equitable access to services, and eliminate any disparate child outcomes by race or ethnicity.

Remote Interpretation Services Amidst COVID-19

In March 2020, ESIT shifted to fully virtual services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, all interpretation also shifted to remote options, including video and phone interpretation.

¹ HCA Proposed 2021-23 Decision Package

² ESIT Data from Department of Early Learning Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) database. Agency Schools Report: January 1, 2019-December 31, 2019

³ Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C § 303.321 and § 303.342

During the COVID-19 state of emergency, HCA has temporarily allowed for video interpretation. To ensure effective communication, the interpreter needs to **see** the child and their interactions in order to understand what the caregiver and ESIT provider are talking about. ESIT providers and families have relied heavily upon video interpretation for providing services.

Ongoing Need for Video Interpretation

Video interpretation is a critical service for families receiving ESIT services whose home language is other than English. The video interpretation platform must allow for the family, provider, and interpreter to be in three separate locations for effective services.

Video interpretation will remain a need for ESIT beyond the pandemic,

as families will continue to prioritize the health of their children and reduce unnecessary exposures. Many ESIT-enrolled children are immunocompromised or medically fragile. Families will continue to rely on virtual services, including video interpretation, to promote their children’s development without putting them at increased risk of exposure to life-threatening illnesses.

HCA is currently seeking a vendor for future video interpretation. It will be essential that any selected vendor allows for three-way video connections to accommodate the family, provider, and interpreter in separate locations to keep everyone healthy.

Maintaining accessible interpretation services will ensure linguistically diverse infants and toddlers and their families receive high-quality, comprehensive developmental services equitably.