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Washington State
Health Care Authority

Creating a Multilingual Workforce &
Language Testing Program

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Defining roles
Bilingual employee

Preferred definition:
A person employed to use their language skills in English and another language with a linguistic proficiency in both languages appropriate to the function of their position who also understands and shares the values of the non-English speaking community they are employed to work with and their employing agency

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Models of a Bilingual Worker

Worker or staff classified as “bilingual” or “multilingual” on the basis that they have:

1. Proficiency in two or more languages;
2. Biculturalism; and
3. Bilingualism and/or biculturalism forming identified employment criteria


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Bilingual worker as:

- 1) one-on-one worker**
*Specialty education and training background to provide **direct** service (case manage) individually or in group – case loads are adjusted appropriately;*
- 2) group educator and information provider**
*Adequate command in English and language other than English (LOTE), and ethical identity to transfer information in a **culturally** effective format while upholding the values of the organization without omitting information;*
- 3) community worker with restricted roles**
LOTE proficiency and ethnic identity for conducting specific work in the presence of a mainstream specialist (community networking to facilitate attendance);
- 4) Individual and family support worker**
Ethnic identity – working with refugees to quickly engage newly arrived populations in social, health, educational, and employment services.

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Testing bilingual employees

WA DSHS Language Testing and Certification


In 1991, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in Washington State initiated an effort to certify its bilingual staff, social service and medical interpreters, and translators working for DSHS throughout its many divisions and programs. This effort was the culmination of lawsuits and civil rights complaints brought against DSHS for not providing equal access to services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) clients. As part of a consent decree, DSHS agreed not only to provide (and pay for) interpreters for clients, but also to ensure the quality of interpreter services provided. DSHS chose to ensure quality through the development and administration of standardized tests.

The Language Testing and Certification program (LTC) was created to develop systems, methods, procedures, and policies in carrying out the department's legal commitment. State laws (RCW 41.56.030; 41.56.113; 41.04.810; 43.01.047; and 74.04.025) requiring the department to provide language services to its LEP clients and to certify and authorize its language access providers were each amended and enacted during the 2010 legislative session.




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Test development

What does it mean to be a CERTIFIED linguist?
(handouts # 2)



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Test development

Testing of bilingual employees

State Agencies will need to develop policy and procedures to regulate and standardize the activities of this type of employees. Compensation mechanism will need to be established (per encounter, percentage of time, etc.) that recognizes the bilingual skills of staff who have been tested and provided with training.


DSHS/HCA testing requirements

Position Clusters, Test Requirements, and Scope of Practice



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Language Proficiency Testing

Other testing resources/options:

The [Interagency Language Roundtable](#) (ILR)


[American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages](#) (ACTFL) (Testing is conducted through LTI – Language Testing International)

[ALTA Language Services](#)



[International Center for Language Studies](#) (ICLS)

[Berlitz](#)

[Transparent Language](#) (free for self-evaluation)





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Questions?

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