

# Spoken Language Healthcare Interpreter Work Group

**DATE: MAY 28, 2026**

**MINUTES PREPARED BY: LEA BITTNER**

**LOCATION: VIA WEBEX**

## Attendance

- Katie Freeman – member
- Lailee Tung – member (Megan Tong – delegate)
- Maikhou Vang – member
- Marc Sony Cadet – member
- Marisa Rueda - member
- Michele Reither – member
- Yvette Beaudelaire – member
- Rachel Herring - member
- Rick Michals – member
- Rosemond Owens - member
- Jia Vang – MDH
- Jill Freudenwald – MDH
- Lea Bittner – Alliant Consulting
- Jessie Schuppe – Alliant Consulting
- Chahira – public attendee

## Agenda

- 2:00 - 2:05 Welcome and Housekeeping
- 2:05- 2:15 Meeting Recap and Project Plan
- 2:15 - 3:00 Member Discussion
- 3:00 – 3:15 Voting on Previous Recommendations (if time)
- 3:15 – 3:20 Discussion of MN's 5 most common languages
- 3:20 - 3:30 Future Meeting Topic Prep, Next Steps and Closing

## Meeting Recap

Member reviewed, refined and began to vote on member-drafted rural gap recommendations. Four recommendations were submitted and a fifth was drafted during the meeting.

1. Proposing a searchable database of interpreters – passed with full endorsement.
2. Proposing a standard mileage reimbursement rate – passed with 67% fully supporting and 33% supporting with minor reservations.
3. Proposing increasing fees to join the registry throughout the first 4 years of entry – not voted on.

4. Proposing MN's registry is able to track fraud and ethics violations for interpreters – passed with 89% fully supporting and 11% supporting with minor reservations.
5. Proposing registry enrollment occur every 2 years rather than every year – not voted on.

Members were reminded that 3 sets of recommendations require additional work/voting.

## Work Group Discussion

**Topic (from statute): convening a meeting** of public and private sector representatives of the spoken language health care interpreters community to identify ongoing sources of financial assistance to aid individual interpreters in meeting interpreter training and testing registry requirements.

- Is there a recommended timeline?
- Statute states that recommendations are required to be submitted by November 1, 2026, for legislative session in 2027.
- We could make a recommendation for when the meeting occurs.
- If we use this time to recommend who should attend such a meeting, do we suggest organizations or people's names?
- Facilitator recommends thinking about groups or organizations in case things change in the convening time; where would you find these members of community?
- Think about how this work group was assembled with various representations as a starting point.
- This group has discussed organizations for MDH to network with regarding potential financial assistance in past meetings.
- Give caution of creating a laundry list; focus on how to help MN interpreters afford to do it; really think about who we would need presented for the focus to be people in MN.
- This group needs to develop ideas for how to provide funding or grants to interpreters.
- Keep this part of the statute in mind when developing recommendations: identify ongoing sources of financial assistance to aid individual interpreters in meeting interpreter training and testing registry requirements.
- We've had several conversations about how MDH cannot provide such funding; how can we have a meeting about funding when we don't know where it would come from?
- The people who would attend the meeting would have access to appropriate financial resources.
- Recommended organizations:
  - DEED
  - MN Council of Health Plans
  - DHS

## SPOKEN LANGUAGE HEALTHCARE INTERPRETER WORK GROUP

- UMTIA
- Major interpreting agencies
- Hospital systems
- Clinics
- LEP organization
- Nonprofit organizations that support a certain ethnicity of culture
- Clinics
- MN Council of Health Plans
- payers
- DHS
- Agencies
- Colleges
- Training facilities
- Special education
- Representatives from deaf and hard of hearing
- Member recalls previous, similar recommendation and sites document for reference:
  - [Interpreting in Health Care Settings: REcommendations for a Tiered Registry \(PDF\) \(https://www.leg.mn.gov/docs/2015/mandated/150235.pdf\)](https://www.leg.mn.gov/docs/2015/mandated/150235.pdf)
  - Review pages 15, 18 and 19 to spur ideas for this recommendation.
- Sorenson
- CCHI
- NBCMI
- NCHCI
- Karen Organization
- Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters
- National Council on Interpreting in Healthcare
- American Translators Association
- Language Services Managers (hospitals, public services, insurance)
- Mayo Clinic
- HCMC, Children's, Fairview, Allina, etc.

- Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association (IMAA) - Rochester based group
- Americans Against Language Barriers (nonprofit training organization that does some lobbying) Kevin Thakkar is the President/CEO
- Cross Cultural Healthcare Providers – CCHP (potential funder)
- Wilder Foundation (nonprofits who grant scholarships)
- Rather than listing specific groups/orgs, it may be necessary to specify criteria for members; identify critical groups vs. attendees; could group by potential
- Carefully consider membership not to be too large for recommendations to be developed by the group
- Recommended type of meeting:
  - Town hall with virtual component for equitable access
  - Include a feedback mechanism for feedback such as a poll
- Other considerations
  - Limit scope of this meeting to ensure tangible outcomes

## Public Comment 5 Common Languages for MN

Late summer public comments will open up. Goal is for the public to react to the recommendations.

Previous recommendations on this subject included:

- The 5 most common languages in MN are **not** mentioned in statute.
- MN language demographic data at MN.gov could be a source of defining the five common languages.
- [Minnesota Compass | All Minnesotans by Immigrant Group](https://www.mncompass.org/topics/demographics/immigration) (<https://www.mncompass.org/topics/demographics/immigration>) is another potential source for this information.
- Suggestion to have interpreters speak rather than write for public comment support, and that interpretation be recorded for reference.

Are there further recommendations on identifying the 5 most common languages in MN for the public comment period?

- The age of data sources should be considered to find the most recent top common languages
- Shared in chat: [Minnesota Compass | Who lives in MN - Demographic data sources](https://www.mncompass.org/demographic-data-sources) (<https://www.mncompass.org/demographic-data-sources>)

## Past Recommendations to Vote On

### Rural Gaps

- Two recommendations not approved:
  - Recommendation 3: Roster Waivers
    - Discussion on roster waivers was around how often they were to enroll for the cost to be less prohibitive
    - How to make recommendation 3 match the every 2 year roster enrollment period
    - Recommendation for the fee would be waived for the first application period of two years; 50% off the second application for years 3 and 4
    - What about the financial hardship for 3 years? Change based on the 2 year enrollment.
    - Proposal to get rid of the financial hardship clause
    - Should the language be changed for years 3 and 4 to be something different such as the second application?
  - Reworded recommendation 5 live from member input
  - Change all references of 'roster' to 'registry'

### Poll to vote on Recommendation 3 - Registry Waiver

- 75% fully endorsed
- 25% support with minor reservations

### Poll to vote on Recommendation 5 - Require Interpreters to enroll in the registry every two years

- 50% fully endorse
- 50% support with minor reservations

Are there any volunteers to review today's recommendations to refine? Katie, Maikou and Michelle.

Reimbursement recommendations refinement: Maikou and Yvette to work on these .

## Reminders

- **Next meeting** will be Meeting #2 on Design Financial Assistance; **Tuesday, June 9<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm.**
- (For 1<sup>st</sup> meetings) Draft recommendations are due Thursday, June 4th and will be shared with members prior to the meeting.
- Please submit resources and SME suggestions for this and other future topics to the shared folder and/or [SLHCIWG.MDH@state.mn.us](mailto:SLHCIWG.MDH@state.mn.us) (copy Rick).

SPOKEN LANGUAGE HEALTHCARE INTERPRETER WORK GROUP

- Submit Expense Forms **for this meeting** to [SLHCIWG.MDH@state.mn.us](mailto:SLHCIWG.MDH@state.mn.us), and **copy** [Rick.Michals@state.mn.us](mailto:Rick.Michals@state.mn.us) and [Julianna.Leintz@state.mn.us](mailto:Julianna.Leintz@state.mn.us).

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