

Language Access Issues a Barrier During COVID19

The coronavirus pandemic is exacerbating the long-simmering problem of language access in healthcare. By Gaby Galvin, US News & World Report.

THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic is intensifying language access issues in health care – problems that could be putting both patients and interpreters, as well as the broader public, at risk.

Roughly 25 million people in the U.S. speak no or limited English, and language access has been a long-simmering problem in medical offices, hospitals and the public health field at large. But in the age of COVID-19, with hospitals in some areas scrambling even to treat patients, sick people don't always have access to interpreters, and interpreters don't always have access to crucial protective gear like masks.

"In good times, effective language access is often not the top priority," says Mara Youdelman, an attorney in Washington, D.C., who works on these issues. "So when you've compounded it with all of the stresses on the health care system right now, it just falls lower and lower down the list."

The consequences can be dire when non-English-speaking patients don't have medical interpreters, who are generally considered better equipped to convey sensitive health information than family members or other informal helpers. A recent ProPublica investigation revealed how in New York City, non-English-speaking patients with COVID-19 – the disease caused by the coronavirus – can be subject to delays and miscalculations in health care facilities, in part because physicians struggle to communicate with them.

"This is what happens when providers have not been trained to use remote interpreters," says Natalya Mytareva, executive director of the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters, or CCHI. "On top of being in this horrible situation we're all in, (non-English-speaking patients) don't get anything communicated to them."

Concerns about language access during the pandemic extend beyond health care facilities. Advocates say that with news and official guidance on the coronavirus evolving so quickly, it's crucial that this public health information is widely accessible in other languages, especially because mass cooperation from the is seen as essential to curbing the spread.

"Hospitals are used to working with interpreters that are on-site, but public health departments and county or city governments are not," says Katharine Allen, co-president of Interpret America, a professional group that convenes interpreters from many fields. "And we have this really ad hoc response across the nation of getting information out to begin with."

The CDC, which publishes coronavirus guidance for health care workers, businesses, schools and the public, makes this information available in languages other than English. Guidance on essential errands like grocery shopping, for example, is available in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Korean, and limited information is available in more than 15 other languages.

Juliet Choi, executive vice president and chief of staff at the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, says official government notices should be available in 10 to 20 languages, and that local health workers and agencies – such as community health centers that serve low-income and marginalized groups – have been filling gaps.

"Those front-line workers should be doing what their expertise is, which is providing the care and being available to their clients – not pulled away from their day job to do the translation and interpretation," Choi says. "I think with a whole-of-government approach, that should be taken care of at the top."

Youdelman, the attorney, says other public and private groups – such as state Medicaid agencies, public health departments, unemployment offices and employers – also should make sure they're publishing information in multiple languages. The recently passed CARES Act, for example, authorized \$25 million for the Small Business Administration to ensure its "resources and services" are available in 10 common languages other than English.

"As we respond to the public health crisis, we have to be conscious of those who have traditionally been left behind," Youdelman says. "Now is not the time to ignore the various civil rights laws and requirements. Now is the time to make sure that everyone has access to the care and the treatment that they need, so we all can come out of this sooner and stronger."

Source: <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2020-04-16/language-access-problems-a-barrier-during-covid-19-pandemic>



May 2020 Calendar

*National Asian American and Pacific
Islander Heritage Month
National Mental Health Month*

- 1 – Beltane (Wicca/Pagan)
- 1 – International Workers' Day
- 3-9 – Public Service Recognition Week (US)
- 4-8 – Teacher Appreciation Week (US)
- 6-12 – Nurses' Day and Week (US)
- 7 – Visakha Puja (Buddhist)
- 7 – National Day of Prayer (US)
- 10 – Mother's Day (International)
- 23 – Declaration of the Bab (Baha'i)
- 25 – Memorial Day (US)
- 29-30 – Shavuot (Judaism)
- 31 – Pentecost (Christianity)



THE CORONAVIRUS DOESN'T DISCRIMINATE AND NEITHER SHOULD WE

Stand with our Asian-American Community Against Hate!

Do you know Asian Americans are being harassed, injured, and blamed for the Coronavirus pandemic?

- “Never come back. Don’t ever come back,” an Indiana gas station store clerk said angrily to an oncologist on his way home from work. The oncologist told the clerk he was born in Kentucky and had not been out of the U.S. for years.
- A 26-year-old woman on the way to her gym in San Francisco was spat on the face by a man who screamed after a passing bus, “Run them over!”
- A father and his 2- and 6-year old children were stabbed in a retail grocery store by a man who accused them of spreading the coronavirus.
- The Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center 2020 received nearly 1,500 reports of verbal and physical harassment within its first month of opening.

What Is A Hate Crime?

"Any Unlawful action against the person or property of another committed substantially because of the victim's *actual* or *perceived* race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, disability, gender or sexual orientation".

(California State Law/City of Davis Website)

What is the Emotional Impact of Hate?

Fear, loss of a sense of safety, avoidance of public places, post-traumatic stress disorder, fear for one’s children. They are also called “Message Crimes” because uninvolved members of the target group thousands of miles away from the original incident can feel the contempt of the perpetrator.

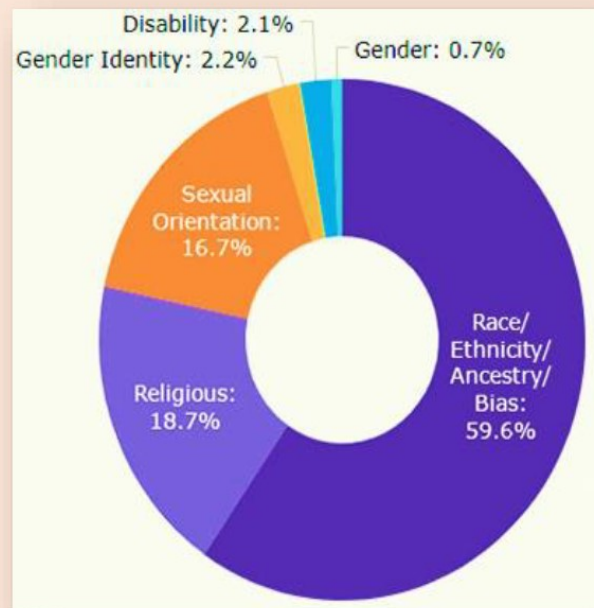
How Many Hate Crimes Per Year?

7,036 per year in U.S. (US Dept. of Justice, 2018)

What Should I Know about the History of Racial Violence against Asian Americans?

- “The Yellow Peril” was the term officials in USA, Canada, Australia and Europe used to refer to the increased immigration of Asians to Western.
- The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1883-1933 meant that Chinese Americans were beaten, killed, and run out of American cities.
- Japanese Americans were imprisoned in Internment Camps during World War II, and some Chinese Americans wore buttons declaring, “I am Chinese.”
- In 1982, 27-year-old Chinese American Vincent Chin was beaten to death in Detroit by two autoworkers who blamed Japanese auto companies for their job losses.

Why Would We Ever Want to Be Part of The History of Racial Violence?



U.S. Bias-Motivated Incidents, 2018