

NCIHC Language Access Congress 2025

Age of Disruption, Innovation and Adaptation



Live Event held in Little Rock Arkansas
September 25-27, 2025

#ncihc2025



NCIHC started by holding its Annual Membership Meeting in a different city every year. To date, we have been to these cities.

CHICAGO, Illinois (2007)
ATLANTA, Georgia (2008)
LAS VEGAS, Nevada (2009)
WASHINGTON, D.C. (2010)
NEW ORLEANS, Louisiana (2011)
MADISON, Wisconsin (2012)
SEATTLE, Washington (2013)
CHARLESTON, South Carolina (2014)
MINNEAPOLIS, Minnesota (2015)
AUSTIN, Texas (2016)
PORTLAND, Maine (2017)
DENVER, Colorado (2018)
PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania (2019)

Due to the pandemic, NCIHC continued to hold its Annual Membership Meeting virtually. (2020 to 2023)

Annual Language Access Congress

In 2023, NCIHC held a virtual Annual Membership Meeting, but we also celebrated our 25th Anniversary through a virtual Language Access Congress.

Based on feedback from our members and attendees, NCIHC has now made this an Annual Language Access Congress.

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (2025)

A Welcome from the President

Welcome to the 2025 NCIHC Language Access Congress!

We are thrilled to gather this year in Little Rock, Arkansas, for our 2nd Annual Language Access Congress, taking place from September 25-27, 2025. Since 2007, the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care has hosted Annual Membership Meetings in 13 cities. The pandemic prompted a shift to virtual gatherings, and in 2023, we proudly celebrated our 25th anniversary with our first virtual Language Access Congress.



Thanks to the overwhelmingly positive response, we've committed to continuing this annual tradition—bringing together professionals, advocates, and new voices in our shared mission of language access in health care.

Our 2025 theme, “Age of Disruption, Innovation, and Adaptation,” reflects both the challenges and the creative energy driving our field forward. We meet at a time when health care access is impacted by shifting policies, administrative transitions, and funding uncertainties. Amid these changes, our focus remains steadfast: promoting equity, amplifying underrepresented voices, and advocating for the right to quality care—regardless of the language spoken.

This Congress offers a valuable opportunity to engage with leading experts, thought leaders, and fellow practitioners. With 21 dynamic sessions led by professionals across the language access spectrum, we aim to spark dialogue, inspire innovation, and strengthen our collective impact. Whether this is your first Congress or you have been with us for years, we are so glad you are here. We are honored to welcome our keynote speaker, Mara Youdelman, a tireless advocate for social justice and health care equity. Her leadership and vision embody the spirit of this Congress and the future we are building together.

A highlight of our gathering is the presentation of the Language Access Champion Awards at our Interpretini Reception. In addition to our educational sessions, we invite you to connect and deepen your experience through special events like the hospital tour, our community Meet & Greet, and of course, the Interpretini Reception.

This Congress is the result of the dedication, vision, and hard work of so many. We are deeply grateful to all who contributed to making it a success. And to our members, participants, and supporters—thank you. Your engagement fuels the movement for health equity and strengthens the mission of NCIHC.

With best wishes for an inspiring and energizing Congress,

Eliana Lobo

President, National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC)

NCIHC Board of Directors 2025-2026



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Program Agenda

THURS
09/25

2:30–4:30 pm

US Central

Hospital Visit at UAMS University of Arkansas Medical Sciences

Rahn Building, Room G219, 4301 West Markham St, Little Rock, AR 72205

6:00–9:30 pm

US Central

Welcome Reception | Meet & Greet

Sterline Market/Alley Box, 515 Shall Ave, Little Rock, AR

FRIDAY
09/26

NCIHC Language Access Congress 2025

Doubletree by Hilton 424 W Markham St, Little Rock, AR 72201

8:00–8:45 am

US Central

Continental Breakfast

Ballroom

8:45–9:00 am

US Central

Opening - Welcome Address

Ballroom

9:00–10:15 am

US Central

Keynote

Mara Youdelman, National Health Education Law Program

Language Access – where are we and where are we going?

Ballroom

10:30–11:45 am

US Central

From Hype to Real-World Solutions: The Interpreting Industry's Collaborative Response to AI (Workshop)

Ludmila Golovine & Dr. Bill Rivers

Ballroom

Advancing Language Accessibility in Healthcare: The Role of AI in Supporting Medical Interpretation. (Panel Discussion)

Aigerim Aliakparova

Room B

Keeping Up with the Machine: Practical Tools for Enhancing Completeness (Workshop)

Gabriela Siebach

Room C

Continued

Program Agenda

FRIDAY
09/26

11:45–1:00 pm
US Central

Lunch

[Ballroom](#)

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[Exhibit Hall](#)

1:00–2:15 pm
US Central

Shaping the Future: Analyzing the Global Workforce Survey of Healthcare Interpreters (Workshop)

Jorge U. Ungo & Vonessa Costa

[Ballroom](#)

Specific Considerations When Interpreting for Queer Women (workshop)

Jordana Avital

[Room B](#)

Interpreting Innovation in Healthcare: Bridging Gaps in Training, Standards, and Technology

Dr. S. Jordan Wright

[Room C](#)

2:30–3:45 pm
US Central

Reaching New Heights: Setting a Bold Standard for Interpreting Skills Assessment with the English-to-English Exam

Jorge U. Ungo & Natalya Myrateva

[Ballroom](#)

Training and Education: Innovative Approaches to Interpreter/Stakeholder Training (Panel Discussion)

Analia C. Lang & Liliana Dinu

[Room B](#)

Innovative Approaches to Interpreter Training and Continuing Education: Shaping the Future of the Profession (Workshop)

Alicia Rueda-Acedo

[Room C](#)

Continued

Program Agenda

FRIDAY
09/26

4:00–5:15 pm
US Central

Update on Revising the NCIHC National Standards of Practice and National Code of Ethics (Panel)

Jane Kontrimas, Maria-Paz Beltran Avery, Lorena Castillo, Fabiola Barrera & Analia Lang

[Ballroom](#)

How AI is Improving Spanish Translations for Health Communication (Presentation)

Anita Bucur

[Room B](#)

Chipping Away the Power Dynamics and Leveling the Playing Field Over Lunch: An Innovative Approach to Integrating the Interpreter Into the Health Care Team (Workshop)

Panelists: Jessica Goldhirsch & Nina Scott

[Room C](#)

6:00–9:00 pm
US Central

Interpretini Reception with Language Access Champion

[Doubletree Palisade](#)

Continued

Program Agenda

SAT
09/27

8:00-8:40 am
US Central

Full Breakfast

[Ballroom](#)

8:40-8:50 am
US Central

Opening Remarks

[Ballroom](#)

9:00-10:15 am
US Central

Adopting Language Access in Healthcare: Exploring Intersectional Identities for Cultural Humility and Inclusivity

Michelle Pinzl

[Ballroom](#)

Empowering Healthcare Interpreters and CoNavigators with Tools, Techniques, and Strategies to Effectively Support DeafBlind Individuals (Workshop)

Keva Richmond

[Room B](#)

Two Workforces, One Mission: Standardizing Healthcare Interpretation (Workshop)

Sarah Attalla

[Room C](#)

10:30-11:45 pm
US Central

Improving Access for the Deaf; Supporting Healthcare Equity (Panel)

Barbara McCormick and Scott Foor, and Chelsea Elertson

[Ballroom](#)

Language Access for Indigenous Populations from Mexico and Guatemala

Aurora Pedro

[Room B](#)

Harnessing the Power of Research to Move Language Access Forward Language Access is more than language provision (Panel)

Indira Sultanić, Tatiana González-Cestari, Michelle Scott &

Dr. Reynaldo Romero

[Room C](#)

Continued

Program Agenda

SAT
09/27

11:45-12:15 pm
US Central

Grab a Bag Lunch
[Ballroom](#)

12:15-1:30 pm
US Central

Interpreting and Autism (Workshop)
Katherine Langan
[Ballroom](#)

Enhancing the Patient Experience Through Innovations in Language Access (Workshop)
Paul Spacek & Elias Vasquez
[Room B](#)

Developing a Medical Genetics Glossary in a Language with Few English Equivalencies (Presentation)
Lori Williamson, MS, CGC, Lynda A. Riklon, & Ann Chou, PhD
[Room C](#)

1:30-1:45 pm
US Central

Closing Remarks
[Ballroom](#)

**The best way to find yourself is to lose
yourself in the service of others.**

-Mahatma Gandhi



Keynote Speaker

Mara Youdelman, J.D.

Language Access – Where are we, and where are we going?



With a change in Administration in Washington, D.C., many of the gains we've seen in language access over the past four years are likely going to change. The keynote will discuss what's happened so far, what we expect to happen in the coming years, how to engage in your state, and how we can organize and advocate to preserve and protect language access.

Mara Youdelman, J.D., LL.M.

Mara Youdelman is Managing Director for Federal Advocacy at the National Health Law Program (NHeLP). She also served as Founding Chair and Commissioner of the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters and rejoined CCHI as a Commissioner in 2023. At NHeLP, Mara coordinated a national coalition to develop a consensus-driven agenda to improve language access policies and funding. Mara is co-author of *Ensuring Linguistic Access in Health Care Settings: Legal Rights and Responsibilities* and, from The Commonwealth Fund, three reports on promising practices for providing language services. She has authored a 50-state survey of state statutes and regulations on language access and written about how Medicaid can pay for language services. Mara is recognized as a national expert on language access and has participated on expert advisory panels for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; the National Committee for Quality Assurance; the National Quality Forum; and The Joint Commission. Mara also co-chairs the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' Health Care Task Force. She earned her B.A. from Tufts University, her J.D. from Boston University School of Law and her LL.M. in advocacy from Georgetown University Law Center.

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Language Access Sessions

Keeping Up with the Machine: Practical Tools for Enhancing Completeness (Workshop)

Presenter: Gabriela Siebach

Accuracy and completeness are foundational expectations for those relying on interpreting services to communicate effectively. Yet for human interpreters, the task is mentally demanding and requires constant refinement. As technology advances, it becomes clear that while machine interpreting often falls short of the desired level of accuracy, it can generally keep pace with the speed and length of communication, delivering messages that are, albeit imperfect, reasonably complete in daily contexts. Professional interpreters, therefore, must continue to hone their skills to meet and exceed these benchmarks. Regular practice and a commitment to improving completeness in our interpretations are essential. Reflexive practice, a widely recognized technique for skill enhancement, becomes even more effective when paired with a structured evaluation tool. A clear rubric for assessing performance and addressing deficiencies is vital for interpreters seeking to elevate their craft. This presentation focuses on applying principles of deliberate practice to improve both completeness and accuracy. Attendees will gain access to a rubric for self-evaluation and practical exercises designed to develop personalized practice routines that will strengthen our own interpreting skills. After a brief introduction about the current capabilities of some Machine Interpreting tools and AI for automated communication between languages, participants will be guided through how we can continue to enhance the accuracy and completeness of our interpreting services to ensure we can stay relevant and truly provide value over machines.

Learning Objectives

- Identify the primary components of the interpreting process.
- Assess personal proficiency in the consecutive interpreting mode.
- Implement a strategy to enhance accuracy and completeness in renditions.

Gabriela Siebach

Gabriela Siebach is a seasoned language professional with over 15 years of experience in linguistics. As Director of Interpreting Services at Cesco Linguistic Services, she oversees all interpreting operations, ensuring client satisfaction and adherence to industry's best practices. With a Master's degree from the renowned Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey and Certified Healthcare Interpreter (CHI™) credentials, Gabriela has spearheaded the development of numerous training, mentorship, and assessment programs. She is an active member of the language services community, contributing through volunteer service to professional organizations.



Advancing Language Accessibility in Healthcare: The Role of AI in Supporting Medical Interpretation (Panel Discussion)

Presenter: Aigerim Aliakparova

This session will give an overview regarding the potential of artificial intelligence (AI)-based interpretation tools to support interpretation within medical settings, highlighting their role as complementary rather than a replacement for traditional interpretation services. Insights will be drawn from a pilot project conducted at Texas Medical Center (TMC), focusing on how AI can be integrated effectively into healthcare workflows to enhance communication for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) patients. With over 25 million LEP individuals in the U.S., language barriers significantly impact patient autonomy, safety, and equitable care. Traditional methods of interpretation, such as gold standard in-person interpretation and video and phone-based service interpretations, are undoubtedly fundamental. However, the shortage of qualified specialists, limited availability, high costs, and logistical challenges often hinder their effectiveness. As AI technologies evolve, their use for medical interpretation presents opportunities to supplement existing services, particularly in non-critical scenarios or during interpreter shortages. This session will explore the findings of the TMC pilot project, including how AI-driven tools can be used to support interpreters and healthcare providers in delivering effective, culturally sensitive communication. We will discuss specific cases where AI technologies enhanced workflows, improved patient-provider interactions, and reduced delays in care. At the same time, we will address the limitations, challenges, and ethical considerations, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that AI tools are aligned with established standards of medical interpretation. Participants will be engaged in discussions on strengthening collaboration between traditional and AI-based interpreters. All attendees will work through scenarios to identify synergies and challenges when integrating AI into workflows. The session will focus on finding common ground and mitigating possible barriers, ensuring that human expertise and technological innovation work together to improve patient outcomes. The session will reinforce the message that AI is not here to replace the invaluable role of human interpreters but rather to serve as an additional resource to enhance accessibility and efficiency. Participants will gain practical skills on how to integrate and utilize AI within their practices, understanding its capabilities, addressing its limitations, and foster collaboration to maintain the highest standards of patient-centered care.

Learning Objectives:

- Explore the Role of AI in Medical Interpretation Services. Participants will gain insights into strategies for effectively incorporating AI-based interpretation tools and understanding how AI-based medical interpretation can complement traditional medical interpretation services across healthcare organizations with varying resources and linguistic diversity.
- Recognize the Opportunities and Challenges of AI-based medical interpretation. Participants will explore the potential benefits and limitations associated with AI-based interpretation techniques, mainly focusing on ethical issues, patient safety concerns, and possible effects on health equity within healthcare organizations.
- Develop Collaborative Integration Strategies: Participants will learn practical strategies of promoting collaboration between human-based and AI-based interpretation, ensuring the ethical application of technology to promote efficient, culturally appropriate, and patient-focused care.

Continued

Aigerim “Aya” Aliakparova

Aigerim “Aya” Aliakparova is a PhD student in Healthcare Ethics at Duquesne University, focusing on healthcare equity and language access. Originally from Kazakhstan, fluent in Russian and Kazakh, with a background in global health, project management, research, customer relations, and medical interpretation. Since 2022, she has been a member of the Cultural Responsiveness Committee for Family Voices’ PEALS project in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She is also a faculty member for the American Academy of Pediatrics ECHO telementoring program “Integrating Language Access into Your Practice for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs,” designed to strengthen healthcare providers’ skills in language access.



From Hype to Real-World Solutions: The Interpreting Industry's Collaborative Response to AI (Workshop)

Presenters: Ludmila Golovine & Dr. Bill Rivers

When ChatGPT launched in late 2022, the language industry faced a familiar scenario: technological disruption accompanied by both hype and fear. But this time, interpreting chose a different path. Drawing from the translation industry's experience with machine translation, interpreting stakeholders moved swiftly to shape rather than simply react to AI's integration into their profession. This presentation shares the notable journey of the SAFE AI Task Force, from its rapid formation in 2023 to its successful creation of industry-wide guidance for AI adoption in interpreting. Presenters will describe how 11 different stakeholder groups and 600 volunteers – including language companies, researchers, interpreters, translators, regulatory agencies, and notably, representatives from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community – came together to create practical, ethical frameworks for AI implementation. Moving beyond speculation, we'll present concrete findings from three major research studies conducted by the Task Force and the Coalition for Sign Language Equity in Technology (Co_SET). These studies provide real-world data on AI's perceived utility and safety in interpreting, as well as current adoption patterns across the industry. We'll share how this evidence-based approach led to the development of the SAFE-AI Guidance document in 2024, which provides practical frameworks for AI implementation across all interpreting verticals, with a focus on health care. Most importantly, we'll examine the current regulatory landscape for AI in interpreting across multiple sectors, helping attendees understand where guardrails exist, where they're still needed and how everyone is responsible for implementing AI tools in interpreting with accountability. This presentation offers valuable lessons about how our industry can proactively shape technological change while maintaining professional standards and ethical practices.

Learning Objectives:

- **Evaluate the Role of Stakeholder Collaboration in AI Integration:** Attendees will analyze the collaborative efforts of 11 stakeholder groups in shaping ethical AI adoption frameworks.
- **Apply Evidence-Based Guidance to AI Implementation:** Attendees will explore the findings from three major research studies conducted by the SAFE AI Task Force and Co_SET and learn how to incorporate the SAFE-AI Guidance into their organizations to ensure practical, ethical AI use in interpreting services.
- **Assess the Current and Emerging Regulatory Landscape:** Attendees will examine the regulatory frameworks governing AI in interpreting, identifying gaps and opportunities for proactive participation in shaping policy and ensuring accountability in AI tool adoption.

Continued

Bio: Ludmila Golovine is the President and CEO of MasterWord, a top ranked LSP globally. Dedicating over 30 years to the language industry, she is one of the founding members of the Interpreting SAFE-AI Task Force. Ludmila also serves as the Strategic Partnerships Manager for Global Community Programs of Women in Localization and is a founding member of the Global Coalition of Language Rights. Her work has been recognized with the NCIHC 2024 Language Access Champion Award, Congressional Recognition G7 “Excellence in International Service” award, and Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Gulf Coast Area regional winner (2023).



Bio: Dr. Bill Rivers is Principal at WP Rivers & Associates. A former Russian/English translator and interpreter, Russian teacher, academic researcher and administrator, and for-profit and nonprofit executive, he has more than 30 years’ experience in language advocacy and capacity at the national level, with significant experience in culture and language for economic development and national security in the Intelligence Community, private and academic sectors, and publications in second and third language acquisition research, proficiency assessment, program evaluation, and language policy development and advocacy. His company is contracted by ALC for advocacy support.



Shaping the Future: Analyzing the Global Workforce Survey of Healthcare Interpreters (Workshop)

Presenters: Jorge U. Ungo & Vonessa Costa

This year, the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI) conducted the groundbreaking Global Workforce Survey of Healthcare Interpreters—the first of its kind aimed at gathering essential data on the working conditions and compensation of healthcare interpreters. This survey reached a diverse audience, including freelance professionals, hospital-based staff, remote and onsite interpreters, and those residing in the U.S. and abroad who serve patients and healthcare organizations based in the U.S. The preliminary results offer a unique glimpse into our profession. Now that the survey has closed, we invite you to join us for an insightful session dedicated to analyzing the data and interpreting its impact on the profession. What insights have emerged? How will these findings enhance working conditions for healthcare interpreters and spearhead data-driven advocacy efforts? During this dynamic presentation, we will delve into the survey results and engage in small group discussions to unpack key data points and brainstorm actionable strategies for implementing change. Each group will share their insights with the larger assembly, fostering collaborative dialogue that can lead to meaningful advancements within our field. While participation in the survey has concluded, your engagement in this session is vital. Together, we can harness this invaluable data to drive systemic change, enhance transparency, and elevate the quality of care for patients facing communication barriers. Your voice matters—let’s shape the future together!

Continued

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will critically examine the preliminary findings of the Global Workforce Survey, identifying key trends and insights related to the working conditions and compensation of healthcare interpreters, and assessing their potential long-term impact on the profession.
- Attendees will engage in collaborative discussions to brainstorm actionable strategies for leveraging survey data to advocate for improved working conditions, professional recognition, and transparency in the healthcare interpreting field.
- Participants will explore effective methods for communicating data-driven insights to decision-makers, empowering informed actions that enhance working standards and elevate the quality of care for patients with communication barriers.

Bio: Vonessa Costa has been Sr. Director of Quality & Member Engagement at Paras and Associates/Health Care Interpreter Network since 2021 and is the Chair of CCHI. Previously, she directed language access initiatives at Cambridge Health Alliance and led the Cross Cultural Communication Institute at CCCS, Inc., focusing on interpreter education and provider training. A CoreCHI-P™ practitioner, she has served as secretary of FOCIS and on the America's Essential Hospitals Education Committee. A graduate of the America's Essential Hospitals Fellows Program, Vonessa received the 2019 MassAHEC Tony Windsor Award for her advocacy in language access and advancing healthcare interpreter professionalization.



Bio: Jorge U. Ungo, RYT® 200 is the Language Access Advocate at CCHI. For over 20 years, Jorge U. Ungo supported healthcare organizations in delivering culturally competent, patient-centered care. Named the "Texas Star in Language Access" (TAHIT, 2015) and a "Language Access Champion" (NCIHC, 2019), he has served on the board of NCIHC, President of TAHIT, and a Commissioner for CCHI. Born in El Salvador and raised in Texas, Jorge is passionate about uplifting marginalized communities and advocating for the underserved, blending his bilingual, bicultural upbringing with a lifelong commitment to equity and inclusion.



Specific Considerations When Interpreting for Queer Women (Workshop)

Presenter: Jordana Avital

This workshop will focus on specific considerations when interpreting for queer women. While there are considerations for working with any member of the LGBTQ+ community, queer women face the challenges of being not only queer, but also the oppression of being a woman. Traditionally education on the LGBTQ+ community has focused on the needs of gay men and has overlooked topics specific for queer women such as appropriate verbiage, social construct as well as barriers in health care. This workshop will examine the history of the oppression of queer women that has set the stage for today. Participants will learn appropriate terms to use when interpreting for queer women as well as specific health care needs that may come up when interpreting. Understanding this often-overlooked community will prepare participants to be able to analyze their own bias as well as recognize the ongoing oppression within their communities. This will provide interpreters with tools for interpreting and working with queer women.

Continued

Learning Objectives:

- Examine implicit bias and its effects on communication
- Analyze trends of marginalization in the health care setting in relation to queer women
- Demonstrate appropriate usage of vocabulary

Bio: Jordana Avital has been a freelance interpreter for nine years and is currently working in the Denver metro area. Jordana received her B.S. in linguistics from the University of Southern Maine and her M.A. in interpreting from St. Catherine University. Her thesis focused on interpreting in support group settings. Jordana has been presenting at conferences since 2020 with a focus on medical interpreting and cultural competency. Currently she teaches interpreters at the Community College of Aurora as well as through her own business Poly Speak. When she is not training and interpreting, she can be found playing for roller derby or cuddling her pets.



Interpreting Innovation in Healthcare: Bridging Gaps in Training, Standards, and Technology

Presenter: Dr. S. Jordan Wright

The healthcare interpreting profession stands at a crossroads during this Age of Disruption, Innovation, and Adaptation. As healthcare delivery rapidly evolves, fueled by emerging technologies and shifting patient demographics, interpreters are increasingly called upon to adapt to new landscapes of care. This session will examine these seismic shifts through the lens of RID's groundbreaking national research, drawing on data from a 70-question survey completed by over 2,000 respondents and insights gleaned from 18 focus groups. Together, these findings illuminate pressing gaps in training, systemic challenges in standardization, and opportunities for innovation that can redefine the future of healthcare interpreting. A key focus of the session will be the transformative impact of telehealth and video remote interpreting (VRI) on healthcare access. While these technologies have expanded opportunities for interpreters to meet the needs of patients across geographic and logistical barriers, they also introduce unique challenges. Technical proficiency, privacy considerations, and the difficulty of establishing rapport in virtual spaces require interpreters to develop specialized skills. These demands highlight a broader need for training programs to integrate technological competencies as a core component of interpreter education. As the healthcare industry becomes increasingly digitized, the interpreting profession must embrace these tools without compromising ethical standards or the quality of patient care. In parallel, this session will critically examine the ethical and systemic implications of training interpreters by trial and error, particularly in medical settings. Deaf patients frequently bear the cost of systemic inadequacies, as interpreters often face real-world scenarios without adequate preparation or specialized training. This reactive approach not only places undue burden on Deaf individuals but also undermines the professional integrity of interpreters. Findings from the RID study reveal that current Interpreter Training Programs (ITPs) do not sufficiently prepare practitioners for the complexities of healthcare environments, necessitating a shift toward more comprehensive and targeted educational paradigms. Findings also indicate that audism is pervasive and perpetuated in ITP programs, which may cause Deaf patients to operate on the offensive in addition to bearing the strain of systemic inadequacies.

Continued

Additionally, the session will address the lack of standardized certification frameworks for medical interpreting. Despite clear evidence from the national survey that interpreters support rate differentials tied to specialization, the absence of formalized benchmarks undermines these efforts. Establishing certification or leveling exams for medical interpreting is not merely an administrative goal but a critical step toward professionalizing the field, ensuring equitable compensation, and safeguarding patient outcomes. These initiatives must be paired with efforts to promote cultural competency and inclusivity, ensuring that training programs and professional standards reflect the diversity of both interpreters and the communities they serve. Finally, the session will emphasize the role of interpreters as both facilitators of communication and advocates for equity within healthcare systems. By engaging with findings from the RID study, attendees will explore actionable strategies to address training gaps, leverage technological innovations, and advocate for systemic change. This session aims to inspire dialogue among interpreters, educators, and healthcare administrators, fostering a collaborative vision for a future where healthcare interpreting not only meets the demands of disruption but thrives within it. Through an academic and data-driven approach, this session will integrate themes of disruption, innovation, and adaptation with practical recommendations for advancing the healthcare interpreting profession. Attendees will leave equipped with a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the field, along with concrete tools to navigate and shape the future of healthcare interpreting in an era of rapid change.

Learning Objectives

- Identify the challenges and opportunities presented by telehealth and VRI in healthcare interpreting.
- Evaluate the ethical and systemic implications of inadequate interpreter training in medical settings.
- Explore strategies for developing industry standards and certifications to professionalize medical interpreting.
- Understand and articulate key findings from RID's national study and their implications for the future of healthcare interpreting.

Bio: S. Jordan Wright, Ph.D. Director of Communications, RID Dr. S. Jordan Wright, Ph.D., is a nationally recognized leader in Deaf health research, communication access, and linguistics, with over 12 years of experience in higher education and a distinguished career in accessibility and advocacy for Deaf communities. As the current Director of Communications for the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), Dr. Wright leverages his expertise in strategic messaging, stakeholder engagement, and large-scale research to strengthen the organization's impact and outreach. He spearheads initiatives like RID's nationwide study on interpreter training, standards, and specialization, aiming to address systemic inequities and improve access for Deaf individuals. A Deaf professional who began learning ASL at 19, Dr. Wright brings both lived experience and scholarly insight to his work. His innovative approaches to interpreter training, standardization, and inclusivity have positioned him as a thought leader in the field. Dr. Wright holds a Ph.D. in Deaf Studies and has presented at national and international conferences.



Reaching New Heights: Setting a Bold Standard for Interpreting Skills Assessment with the English-to-English Exam (Workshop)

Presenter: Jorge U. Ungo & Natalya Myrateva

In 2017, CCHI began discussions with stakeholders and focus groups about the feasibility of exploring whether cognitive interpreting skills can be measured via a monolingual standardized oral performance test in English (English-to-English or EtoE). This innovative approach provides a viable assessment tool for interpreters of less common languages (i.e., languages of lower incidence), where creating a separate dual-language oral performance exam is often unfeasible. The English-to-English exam evaluates interpreting readiness in U.S. healthcare settings through indirect methods that assess cognitive interpreting skills rather than direct interpreting skills. The exam includes various components such as paraphrasing, listening comprehension, shadowing, memory capacity, and reading comprehension. Paraphrasing, for instance, demonstrates English comprehension of U.S. medical discourse, the accuracy of conversion without changing meaning, and depth of vocabulary in English. What sets this exam apart is its performance component, which elevates national certification by providing interpreters of all languages the opportunity to demonstrate their readiness for healthcare interpreting without the logistical challenges of creating bilingual performance tests. During this presentation, participants will have the opportunity to engage in mock exam exercises, gaining firsthand experience with the efficacy of this innovative method for assessing and predicting interpreting skills. Join us as we aim higher and establish new benchmarks in the field of healthcare interpreting!

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of the English-to-English exam's innovative approach to evaluating cognitive interpreting skills, recognizing its relevance and application in assessing readiness for interpreting in U.S. healthcare settings.
- Attendees will actively participate in mock exam exercises, allowing them to experience firsthand the assessment methods used in the English-to-English exam and how these methods effectively predict interpreting skills regardless of their LOTE working language.
- Participants will explore how the incorporation of performance components into the certification process enhances the credibility and accessibility of interpreter assessments, fostering discussion on how this approach can set new benchmarks in the field of healthcare interpreting.

Bio: Natalya Mytareva, M.A., ICE-CCP, is the Executive Director of CCHI and a Commissioner for the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). A Russian interpreter/translator, she began her career in 1991 as an instructor at Volgograd State University (VSU), where she earned a BA/MA in Philology & English Language Education. From 2000–2013, she served as Communications Director at the International Institute of Akron. Natalya has developed and taught interpreter courses, with a focus on languages of lesser diffusion. In 2023, she received the Language Access Champion award from the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care.



Continued

Bio: Jorge U. Ungo, RYT® 200 is the Language Access Advocate at CCHI. For over 20 years, Jorge U. Ungo supported healthcare organizations in delivering culturally competent, patient-centered care. Named the "Texas Star in Language Access" (TAHIT, 2015) and a "Language Access Champion" (NCIHC, 2019), he has served on the board of NCIHC, President of TAHIT, and a Commissioner for CCHI. Born in El Salvador and raised in Texas, Jorge is passionate about uplifting marginalized communities and advocating for the underserved, blending his bilingual, bicultural upbringing with a lifelong commitment to equity and inclusion.



Training and Education: Innovative Approaches to Interpreter/Stakeholder Training (Presentation)

Presenters: Alicia Rueda-Acedo

In the United States, millions of individuals with limited English proficiency face challenges accessing healthcare due to a system that has historically struggled to address their linguistic and cultural needs. Recognizing this critical gap, our project evaluated the feasibility and effectiveness of Simulation-Based Learning (SBL) to train interdisciplinary teams working with both professional interpreters and non-professional family members. The simulations were conducted at the University of Texas at Arlington Smart Hospital, providing a realistic healthcare environment. We conducted two live simulation scenarios involving students from social work, nursing, and translation and interpreting programs. The simulations compared situations involving family members versus trained medical interpreters during hospital discharge preparation. This experiential learning approach deepened students' understanding of the importance of professional language services, enhanced their intercultural competence, and strengthened their capacity to provide culturally competent care. Students learned first-hand that interpreters are part of the healthcare team. By fostering collaboration among different disciplines, our initiative helped address healthcare delivery challenges, promoting the use of professional interpreters to optimize patient outcomes, reduce health disparities, and ensure safer healthcare experiences.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize the importance of fostering collaboration across interdisciplinary teams to improve healthcare delivery and patient outcomes.
- Evaluate the value of teamwork in reducing health disparities and ensuring culturally competent care and the medical interpreter as part of the healthcare team
- Assess the relevance of Simulation-Based Learning (SBL) as an effective tool for training medical interpreters

Bio: Dr. Alicia Rita Rueda-Acedo is an Associate Professor of Spanish Translation and Literature at The University of Texas at Arlington. She founded and directs the Spanish Translation and Interpreting program, which received the 2023 Example of Excelencia in Education award. With over 20 years of experience training translators and interpreters, she has developed internships and service-learning collaborations with more than 30 nonprofits and hospitals in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Her research focuses on transatlantic literature, literary journalism, and community translation. She has authored two books on literary journalism and numerous articles and book chapters in her areas of expertise.



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Bio: Karla Arenas-Itotia, MA, MSSW, LMSW (she/her), is an Associate Professor of Practice at UTA's School of Social Work. With experience in higher education, healthcare, and non-profits, she teaches undergraduate and graduate students, focusing on experiential learning and student success. She promotes wellness, education access, and professional development. Bilingual in English and Spanish, Karla provides virtual counseling and psychoeducational services in Texas. Her interests include social work education, online and interprofessional learning, student success, trauma, mental health, interpersonal violence, and issues of gender, family, race, and ethnicity, alongside community outreach and school social work initiatives.



Bio: Dr. Jaclyn Kirsch (she/her), PhD, MSW, MPH, LISW-S, is an Assistant Professor at UTA's School of Social Work. Her research aims to improve mental health outcomes for diverse populations, including forced migrants and individuals in low- and middle-income countries. Using transformative mixed methods and community-based approaches, Dr. Kirsch prioritizes community voices. She investigates the impact of collective trauma on mental health and well-being, designing group and community-based interventions. Current projects focus on collective trauma among language interpreters, mental health in Southern Belize, and the experiences of Afghan women displaced by war.



Bio: Dr. Jennifer Roye, EdD, MSN, RN, CHSE-A, CNE, is the Assistant Dean for Simulation and Technology and a Clinical Assistant Professor at UTA's College of Nursing and Health Innovation Smart Hospital. She directs the Health Informatics Certificate program and leads the Fundamental Telehealth Skills course. A former CPNP and emergency RN, Dr. Roye has over 25 years of clinical experience. Her EdD in Instructional Leadership was earned from the University of Alabama in 2024. Her research interests include simulation, telehealth, AI, technology in nursing education, interprofessional education, and health informatics, focusing on advancing nursing education and practice



Innovative Approaches to Interpreter Training and Continuing Education: Shaping the Future of the Profession (Workshop)

Presenters: Analia C. Lang & Liliana Dinu

Interpreters must continuously refuel, recharge, and refocus to excel in their craft. Achieving excellence requires more than technical skills; it demands intentional efforts to refine abilities through innovative training, collaboration, and technology integration. This session explores the transformative power of deliberate practice, constructive feedback, and community support as foundational elements for professional growth. Collaboration is essential in this journey. Guided sessions, such as those at conferences, provide a vital platform for interpreters to speak freely, share experiences, and engage in meaningful dialogue about challenges and solutions. The excitement may last days or weeks but what happens afterwards? How can interpreters continue

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excellence are essential to equipping interpreters with the tools and opportunities necessary to expanding and increasing the knowledge attained? Technology is revolutionizing the interpreting field. Practice time with artificial intelligence is critical. These tools enable interpreters to adapt to a dynamic and evolving industry while enhancing their professional capabilities. Organizational support and industry-wide advocacy remain crucial. Policies and resources that prioritize serve diverse communities effectively. A shared commitment to raising industry standards ensures interpreters remain resilient and prepared for future challenges. This session provides actionable insights into the importance of deliberate practice, fostering growth through collaboration, and leveraging AI for professional success.

Learning Objectives:

- Explore innovative approaches to interpreter training that prioritize deliberate practice, constructive feedback, and building community as a profession.
- Develop skill-building strategies with artificial intelligence. This technological adaptation will add another tool to enhance accuracy, consistency, and efficiency.
- Discuss the importance of supporting, promoting, and implementing Industry Standards and Organizational support to interpreters.

Bio Liliana Dinu is a fierce advocate for language access, human rights, and environmental law. She started her career as an E.U. conference interpreter. She fell in love with medical interpreting in the U.S., where she saw firsthand how language access could transform lives. With a background spanning Europe and the U.S., Liliana brings expertise in intercultural communication, public relations, and administrative leadership. Liliana has an M.A. in Translation Studies and Interpreting from Ruprecht-Karls Universität Heidelberg and a relentless drive for innovation. She has made it her mission to disrupt outdated models of interpretation and set new standards in the field.



Bio: Analía C. Lang, CHI-Spanish, acquired her BA from Indiana University. She has been a healthcare interpreter since 2005. Analía has interpreted in all modalities, face-to-face, VRI, and OPI. As a trainer, Analía has instructed interpreters for more than 20 years. She has developed webinars, workshops, and training curricula. She has been a presenter at conferences, and she is a contributing author of The Remote Interpreter textbook. She serves as a member of the NCIHC Standards and Training Committee and as a co-chair of its NES work group. Presently, Analía is the Manager of Training and Curriculum for Cross-Cultural Communications, LLC.



Update on Revising the NCIHC National Standards of Practice and National Code of Ethics (Panel)

Presenters: Jane Kontrimas, Maria-Paz Beltran Avery, Lorena Castillo, Fabiola Barrera & Analia Lang

Are you wondering about the NCIHC update of the National Code of Ethics and National Standards of Practice? As part of the process to update the National Standards of Practice (NSoP) and National Code of Ethics (NCoE) the National Ethics and Standards Work Group of the NCIHC held several focus groups to hear from interpreters and other stakeholders. Join us to hear about the proposed changes to the National Standards of Practice and National Code of Ethics that grew from the ideas people shared with us.

In this session, we will address the following:

- A key “paradigm” shift from describing healthcare interpreting simply as a role, to redefining what a healthcare interpreter does as a practice profession aligned with other practice professions in the medical sphere;
- The understanding that healthcare interpreting upholds key values related to desired outcomes for any interpreted encounter in healthcare;
- Understanding the relationship between values, ethical principles, and standards of practice and how to draw on them to choose the best course of action in a specific situation. The session will also clarify why the NCOE and NSOP are not considered inflexible rules. Rather, we will present a way of using the NCOE and NSOP as guidelines to help evaluate the options in any given situation, and to choose the most appropriate action(s) that are in line with the value(s) and goal(s) that are most important in that specific situation.

Learning Objectives:

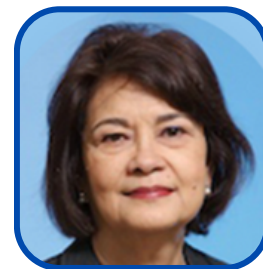
- Gain an overview of the National Ethics and Standards Work Group Focus group process.
- Learn what a practice profession is and why it is important to see healthcare interpreting as a practice profession.
- Understand the relationship between values, ethical principles, and standards of practice and how they help interpreters make good choices.

Bio: Jane Crandall Kontrimas, CoreCHI™, M.S., has worked as a Russian Interpreter since 1978. She was a founding member of the Massachusetts Medical Interpreter Association (MMIA) (Now IMIA) and chaired the MMIA Standards of Practice Committee when the “Standards of Practice for Medical Interpreters” was written. She has been an SME for the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters and a Director of the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC) 2018-2020. With the NCIHC Ethics and Standards Workgroup, she co-wrote INTERPRETER ADVOCACY IN HEALTHCARE ENCOUNTERS: A CLOSER LOOK and is revising the National Code of Ethics (NCoE) and National Standards of Practice. (NSoP).



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Bio: Maria-Paz Beltran Avery, PhD Maria-Paz Beltran Avery, PhD, directed a federally funded project in 1990 to develop a college-level certificate program to train bilingual adults as healthcare interpreters. She collaborated with the IMIA to create the Medical Interpreting Standards of Practice. She participated in national meetings focused on healthcare interpreting that became the NCIHC. As a member of the Standards and Training Committee, she contributed to the development of the National Code of Ethics and the National Standards of Practice. She volunteers as a member of the National Ethics Standards Subcommittee and is presently revising the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.



Bio: Lorena Castillo, CMI-Spa, CHI-Spa, Credentialed Instructional Designer. Lorena has 20 years of experience as a Spanish interpreter. She soon realized the power of learning other languages to help those around her to communicate. She learned ASL and combined her knowledge and passion for both cultures to interpret for d/Deaf and Hispanic communities. To validate her skills as a medical interpreter, she has completed training including interpreter training and a fellowship (ASL), medical terminology, and Instructional Design. She currently works for AMN Interpreting, in Training and Development as an Instructional Design Manager, where she supports the development team with content creation.



Bio: Fabiola Barrera, PhD. Fabiola is a certified medical and legal interpreter. She also obtained her "Mental Health Interpreting" certificate from Virginia. Fabiola holds a master's in health administration from the University of Cincinnati. She is in the final stage of a doctoral program in Strategic Leadership. Her doctoral study is on Change Management and Employee Satisfaction. Fabiola is currently the manager of Language Access at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. She also manages Cincinnati Children's Qualified Bilingual Staff Program. Fabiola was recently elected as an NCIHC director. One of Fabiola's projects is to create a training curriculum for interpreters working in pediatrics.



Bio: Analía Castellero-Lang, CHI-Spanish, acquired her BA from Indiana University. She has been a healthcare interpreter since 2005. Analía has interpreted in all modalities, face-to-face, VRI, and OPI. As a trainer, Analía has instructed interpreters for more than 20 years. She has developed webinars, workshops, and training curricula. She has been a presenter at conferences, and she is a contributing author of The Remote Interpreter textbook. She serves as a member of the NCIHC STC and as a co-chair of its NES work group. Presently, Analía is the Manager of Training and Curriculum for Cross-Cultural Communications, LLC.



How AI is Improving Spanish Translations for Health Communication (Presentation)

Presenter: Anita Bucur

Health literacy remains a significant challenge for non-English speakers in the United States, who are more likely than other groups to encounter barriers to accessing and understanding health information. To address these disparities, health materials should be translated into other languages and written in a way that ensures they are culturally relevant and adhere to health literacy and plain language best practices. Artificial intelligence (AI) offers new opportunities to increase access to readable, understandable, and actionable health information. This session will describe our work to build a knowledge repository in ChatGPT to improve plain language qualities of Spanish translations. The repository includes plain language guidelines tailored to Spanish translations, culturally relevant examples, health communication standards and a checklist to support clarity, simplicity, and cultural appropriateness. Spanish translators trained in plain language reviewed AI-generated translations to provide feedback to enhance the model, refine the outputs, and reduce errors.

We will share insights from this work, focusing on both the challenges of ensuring accuracy, readability, and cultural relevance and the strategies we developed to address them. Participants will gain practical ideas for combining AI tools with expert review to improve the quality of translated health materials for non-English speaking audiences.

Learning Objectives:

- Describe the rationale for attention to clearly written translated health materials and challenges associated with communicating with non-English speakers.
- Describe the process to create a knowledge repository to improve the plain language qualities of health materials translated to Spanish.
- Discuss strategies to overcome challenges and limitations to improve plain language qualities of translations to improve the clarity and cultural relevance of Spanish translations.

Bio: Anita Bucur is the bilingual program administrator at the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences (UAMS) Center for Health Literacy. She leads Spanish plain language services, manages patient education materials, and coordinates field testing. Fluent in Romanian and Spanish, she also speaks French. Anita holds bachelor's degrees in international studies and Spanish, plus two master's degrees in public administration and business administration.



Chipping Away the Power Dynamics and Leveling the Playing Field Over Lunch: An Innovative Approach to Integrating the Interpreter into the Health Care Team (Workshop)

Presenters: Jessica Goldhirsch & Nina Scott

Interpreted encounters are more likely to be effective both linguistically and culturally when provider and interpreter work as partners. This workshop shall include a review of the rationale for continuing education in palliative care for medical interpreters. It will also include a review of the value of teaching palliative care providers how to work effectively with medical interpreters. The presenters will then engage the participants in a discussion about the impact of instructional design employing dialogues between learners from different professions within a health care hierarchy. For providers and medical interpreters to work together effectively, they must work as partners overcoming language and cultural barriers as well as professional power differentials. Participants will realize how the educational design of dialogues in palliative care which took place over a hot meal, cultivated the partnership between interpreter and providers as they taught one another and learned from one another.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will recognize the value of using facilitated dialogues to build working partnerships between medical interpreters and palliative care providers.
- Participants will recognize the value of using facilitated dialogues to facilitate teaching and learning between interpreters and providers.
- Participants will gain new perspectives in the value of innovative instructional design to build skills and change behaviors among both interpreters and providers.

Bio: Jessica Goldhirsch, MPH, MSW, LICSW, clinical social worker, Brigham and Women's Hospital/Dana-Farber Cancer Institute palliative care consult service. Previously, Ms. Goldhirsch founded a medical interpreter services department at a community hospital and later coordinated training for an urban teaching hospital's interpreter services department. She has developed curricula and taught medical interpreters and clinicians to work together for over 25 years. She has published and presented nationally and internationally on medical interpreter training and education. Ms Goldhirsch has a master's degree in social work from Boston College and a master's degree in public health from Boston University.



Bio: Nina Scott, MSHS, CMI-Spanish is the Director of Interpreter Services at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, an instructor and language coach for the Massachusetts Medical Interpreting Training Course via Health Consulting at UMass Chan Medical School and is a member of the Forum on the Coordination of Interpreter Services (FOCIS). Previously, Nina served as an instructor for the Medical Interpreting Course at Boston University, as Coordinator of Interpreter Services at McLean Hospital and as a board member of FOCIS and worked as a medical interpreter at UMass Memorial Medical Center and Shriners Hospitals for Children-Boston. Nina has a BA in International Cultures and Economics from Bentley College and a MS in Management in Human Services from the University of Massachusetts-Boston.



Training and Education: Innovative Approaches to Interpreter/Stakeholder Training (Workshop)

Presenter: Michelle Pinzl

Racial and socio-economic disparities in the United States demand action from all sectors of society, including interpreters and translators, who play a pivotal role in language access and cultural mediation. As cultural brokers and facilitators of communication, language access providers are uniquely positioned to address racial and social inequities, especially in healthcare settings. The linguistic and cultural challenges faced by linguistically diverse individuals are often compounded by structural inequities in healthcare, legal, and social systems. Interpreters and translators—many of whom are members of marginalized communities—are not only impacted by these inequities in their professional environments, but they also witness the racial injustices experienced by linguistically diverse patients and clients. As healthcare landscapes continue to evolve, it is essential for language access services to adapt to new demands and emerging challenges. This includes preparing interpreters for future demands through innovative training and continuing education that address both the changing nature of healthcare systems and the growing need for cultural humility and competency. This session will explore how interpreters and translators can better meet these challenges by engaging in self-reflection and examining their own intersecting identities. By understanding how privilege works to normalize certain identities while marginalizing others, interpreters may gain insight on how to foster greater community, empathy, and inclusivity in their practice. Through a brief review of data from surveys and focus groups conducted within translation and interpreting (T&I) classrooms and workshops, this session will showcase innovative training approaches that integrate identity-building exercises and facilitated group discussions. Ultimately, this session will demonstrate how interpreters and translators, as stakeholders in the broader healthcare system, can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable future by adapting their practice to reflect evolving cultural and linguistic needs.

Learning Objectives:

- Examine the impact of intersecting identities on interpreter practice
- Evaluate innovative training methods for addressing privilege and bias in interpreter education
- Develop approaches to adapt language access services to meet emerging healthcare demands

Bio: Michelle Pinzl (she/her/ella) is an Associate Professor at Viterbo University, where she directs the Community Interpreting Certificate program and teaches Spanish, French and interpreting studies. She holds a PhD in Translation and Intercultural Studies from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in Spain and an MA in Foreign Languages and Intercultural Management from the Université de Limoges in France. A certified court interpreter and healthcare interpreter, Michelle brings over two decades of experience in the field and has been training aspiring interpreters since 2015.



Empowering Healthcare Interpreters and CoNavigators with Tools, Techniques, and Strategies to Effectively Support DeafBlind Individuals (Workshop)

Presenter: Keva Richmond

This hands-on workshop is designed to empower healthcare interpreters and CoNavigators with the tools, techniques, and strategies needed to effectively support DeafBlind individuals in healthcare settings. Through an interactive and engaging format, participants will immerse themselves in real-world scenarios, exploring and practicing approaches that ensure seamless communication and collaboration. The session begins with a brief introduction to the unique needs of the DeafBlind community and the critical role of interpreters and CoNavigators in facilitating access. Participants will then engage in small group activities and role-playing exercises to develop practical skills in tactile communication, including the principles of ProTactile language, an essential method for interacting with DeafBlind individuals. To make the workshop more engaging, attendees will participate in simulated healthcare scenarios that highlight common challenges, such as navigating medical facilities, conveying complex medical information, and addressing emergency protocols. These exercises are designed to help participants build confidence and adaptability when working in high-pressure, fast-paced environments. The workshop will also provide actionable strategies for fostering inclusivity, ensuring safety, and creating a collaborative environment that empowers DeafBlind individuals to actively participate in their healthcare decisions. Feedback and peer discussions will be integrated into the session to encourage reflection, foster learning, and promote shared insights among participants. By the end of the session, attendees will leave with a comprehensive toolkit of practical skills and strategies they can immediately apply in their work, enhancing their ability to provide empathetic, high-quality support to DeafBlind consumers in diverse healthcare settings. This workshop promises to be an interactive, informative, and transformative experience that will inspire participants to elevate their practice and contribute meaningfully to advancing language access in healthcare.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify and implement safety protocols specific to DeafBlind consumers in healthcare settings.
- Demonstrate effective tactile communication techniques, including the use of ProTactile language.
- Develop strategies to foster inclusivity and empower DeafBlind individuals in healthcare interactions.

Bio: Keva Richmond, DeafBlind Accessibility Advocate and Trainer.

Affiliation: Evolve Access, LLC Keva Richmond is a DeafBlind accessibility advocate, mentor, and trainer with over a decade of experience in promoting access for the DeafBlind community. As the founder of Evolve Access, LLC, Keva specializes in training interpreters and CoNavigators in ProTactile communication and best practices for working in healthcare, educational, and community settings. Keva's workshops emphasize hands-on learning, fostering inclusive environments, and empowering DeafBlind individuals to engage meaningfully in all aspects of life. Their dynamic and engaging training style inspires participants to approach their work with empathy, innovation, and confidence.



Two Workforces, One Mission: Standardizing Healthcare Interpretation (Workshop)

Presenter: Sarah Attalla

The healthcare interpretation field has indeed undergone significant changes in recent years, with remote interpretation services seeing a 30% increase since pre-pandemic levels, according to a 2022 Nimdzi report. However, the current and only existing standards for healthcare interpreter training, established by the NCIHC in 2011, primarily focus on on-site interpreters and do not fully address all the unique and ever-changing needs of remote interpreters. This discrepancy has inevitably led to the development of two distinct workforces: on-site and remote interpreters, with the latter often based outside the US and which services much of the 24/7 healthcare interpretation demand. These two groups face different challenges and require varied skill sets, resulting in inconsistent levels of service. In addition to traditional interpreter skills and traits, remote interpreters must also demonstrate: Enhanced active listening skills to compensate for the lack of visual cues (especially in telephonic interpretation); Proficiency in using technology platforms as well as troubleshooting and communicating mid-session technical issues; The ability to mitigate prolonged cognitive, physical, and emotional fatigue; The ability to convey empathy and establish trust without physical presence; Mastery of turn-taking and interruption techniques in a virtual environment; Cultural competence, specifically regarding the culture of medicine in the US. In this workshop, we will analyze the NCIHC Training Standards and explore concrete ways that these tenants could be modified to create comparable standards for our remote interpreter colleagues. Leveraging topics such as environmental control, fatigue management, interprofessional collaboration, and non-verbal communication, we will brainstorm together how this living document could be updated to reflect training gaps in remote interpretation. By collaborating to address these training gaps, the healthcare interpretation field can ensure that both on-site and remote interpreters are equally prepared to provide high-quality, accurate, and culturally sensitive interpretation services, ultimately improving patient care and outcomes in our increasingly diverse healthcare system.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the unique challenges faced by remote healthcare interpreters and the subsequent required skills
- Analyze the current NCIHC healthcare interpreter training standards
- Explore concrete ways that these standards could be modified to create an expanded document tailored to remote interpretation

Bio: Sarah Attalla, M.A., CHI-SQuality and Training Analyst- Boostlingo. Highly educated and experienced healthcare interpreter and interpreter trainer with 13 years of experience in many corners of the language access industry. Passionate about health equity and language justice, Sarah is currently the Quality and Training Analyst for Boostlingo where she works to ensure that interpretation quality standards are upheld and that remote interpreters feel supported, equipped and empowered to succeed and provide excellent interpretation services. Sarah obtained NBCMI certification in 2016, CCHI certification in 2023, and her Master of Arts Degree in Interpretation and Translation in 2024.



Improving Access for the Deaf; Supporting Healthcare Equity (Panel)

Presenters: Barbara McCormick, Scott Foor, and Chelsea Elertson

This interactive discussion with deaf and hard of hearing patients is moderated by a nurse and a sign language interpreter/EMT. Many Deaf and hard of hearing users rely on American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate within the healthcare setting, especially in emergency scenarios. This panel will seek to include deaf and hard of hearing patients, sign language users, cochlear implant users, hearing aid users, parents of deaf children, and children of deaf adults (CODAs). We aim to fill the gap between the healthcare team, deaf patients, family, caregivers, sign language interpreters, and agencies to discuss the diverse needs of the deaf community. We will examine the impact of adverse Child of Deaf Adult (CODA) caregiver experiences or other family members who are relied on to "interpret." The anxiety and distress felt by the deaf community in the healthcare settings have pediatric implications through adulthood. This presentation will evaluate long term effects in a discussion-based forum to understand the responsibilities of healthcare providers outlined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This closer look into this community will provide a broader takeaway applicable to other spoken languages as well. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), estimates only 1 in 10 Americans are health literate: 90% do not know how to get, process, and understand basic health information. Limited English proficient (LEP) populations and deaf and hard of hearing populations, who are sometimes LEP, are significantly disadvantaged with access to healthcare resources and demonstrate decreased healthcare literacy. Reports suggest that deaf high school graduates have a median reading level between fourth and fifth grade standards (Gallaudet University Center for Assessment and Demographic Study, 1998; Traxler, 2000). This vulnerable population has special needs to bridge gaps in care when engaging with the healthcare system. They receive inconsistent care, decreased access to preventative care, and high rates of hospitalization and readmission due, in part, to lack of deaf awareness from professionals. Learn about available language services from real life patient experiences: hear their stories, learn how the industry can do better to improve language access by providing linguistically appropriate services. Deaf sign language users represent a low incidence disability, yet extremely high impact for miscommunication and medical malpractice. National CLAS Standards and improved ADA compliance are recommended to select accessible treatment options. Subjective information shared by patients using their preferred language is critical to support safe and consistent care for positive patient experiences. Non-professional ad hoc interpreters may misinterpret or omit key information and are less likely to note medication side effects or other important clinical information. Communication barriers play a substantial role in adverse events for both non-English speaking and deaf patients.

Learning Objectives:

- Describe Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation requests for "equal and effective" communication needs for language access
- Identify strategies to prevent avoidable miscommunication within the healthcare team to protect all stakeholders and improve care
- Comprehend safety and satisfaction issues related to communication barriers

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Bio: Barbara McCormick DNP, RN, CEN has over 30 years in nursing for Jefferson Health. She is a resource nurse for critical care and the emergency department and collaborates with nursing leadership to develop strategies for nursing recruitment, retention, education, and research. She is a clinical faculty member for Jefferson College of Nursing and a Lieutenant Colonel in the Delaware Air National Guard where she serves as the Chief Nurse for the 166th Medical Group. Barbara's nursing career includes many roles. In addition to her civilian and military commitment, she is the 2025 NJ Emergency Nurses Association president.



Bio: Scott E. Foor, MA is the CEO for Deaf Intervention Services (DeafIS). He has been working with deaf and hard of hearing populations for 22 years and has been an EMT for 17 years in the Army and the Air Force. Scott currently serves as the Training Sergeant for the Continuing Medical Readiness Program at the Wyoming Air National Guard for the 153rd Medical Group. DeafIS provides sign language interpreters for hospitals, emergency departments, and medical clinics all over Wyoming. Scott is passionate about partnering with the deaf community to fulfill service requests for sign language interpreting.



Bio: Chelsea Elertson is a contracted Records Keeper for Deaf Intervention Services, Substitute Teacher, Deaf coach, and private ASL tutor. Chelsea became deaf at 6 months old. She attended Central Institute for the Deaf (CID) for 12 years to learn to speak English. Chelsea learned American Sign Language (ASL) as a freshman in high school. She received a cochlear implant in 1991 and discontinued use two years later. Chelsea has been married to a Deaf gentleman for 25 years, and they have 3 sons. Chelsea satisfies her life's passion in connecting the Deaf and hearing worlds.



Language Access for Indigenous Populations from Mexico and Guatemala

Presenter: Aurora Pedro

There are over 500 Indigenous languages spoken in Latin America. Why does the popular narrative continue to assume that everyone from south of the US-Mexican border speaks Spanish and Spanish continues to be the default language for interpretation services? This is not by accident but by design. During this lecture-based presentation, which includes polls, and interactive conversations, you will learn from Indigenous experts in the field about the diversity of Indigenous communities, best practices, and techniques for identifying Indigenous languages. You will learn about case studies that demonstrate how this dominant narrative has fatal consequences, the effects of data genocide, and the efforts of Indigenous peoples to fight for their language rights.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will learn about the diversity of Indigenous languages and techniques on how to identify these languages. Participants will walk away with the knowledge to apply these techniques in their everyday work.
- Participants will learn about best practices for interpretation when working with Indigenous interpreters and the community. This will include unique situations that may arise when working with Indigenous populations.
- Participants will learn how data genocide erases Indigenous populations, the fatal consequences, and how to not contribute to data genocide.

Bio: Aurora Pedro is queer Maya Akateko and Q'anjob'al from Huehuetenango, Guatemala. She manages the Center for Indigenous Languages and Power (CILP) at Comunidades Indígenas en Liderazgo (CIELO). Aurora co-facilitates cultural sensitivity workshops, focusing on language diversity and migration patterns by looking at the root and historical context of displacements of Maya communities from Guatemala. She is a trained interpreter in English, Akateko, and Q'anjob'al and incorporates these skills in her work as a doula for Indigenous parents and helps them navigate the healthcare system. Aurora continues to develop her skills to assist Indigenous communities and fight for linguistic rights.



Harnessing the Power of Research to Move Language Access Forward Language Access is More than Language Provision (Panel)

Presenters: Indira Sultanić, Tatiana González-Cestari, Michelle Scott & Dr. Reynaldo Romero

Language access is more than language provision. For example, while it might be true that one can master interpreting skills without actively engaging with evidence-based research, research, education, and practice, are what helps steer the profession along the same course. The new and rapidly changing technologies continue to alter how we think about language access, and urge us to redefine the role and the importance of every stakeholder at the heart of human-centered care. This panel, composed of researchers, educators, practitioners, and patient care providers, will explore the intersection of research, practice, and education in language access. By bringing together experts from diverse backgrounds, this panel will foster a dynamic discussion on how research supports processes, policies, data analysis, training, and quality assurance as well as informed decision-making in practice, and how it can be used to effectively articulate the necessity of human expertise in nuanced, high-stakes interpreter-mediated medical interactions.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the role of research in language access
- Learn how to analyze and leverage research to support healthcare language services
- Identify strategies for strengthening and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers, educators, practitioners, and providers to improve language access, interpreter training, and patient outcomes

Bio: Indira Sultanić, Ph.D., CHI-Spanish Assistant Professor of Spanish Translation and Interpreting Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University Indira Sultanić, Ph.D., CHI™-Spanish, is an Assistant Professor of Spanish Translation and Interpreting Studies in the School of World Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. She is an interpreting studies scholar and has authored articles and book chapters on medical interpreter education and training, interpreting for vulnerable populations and unaccompanied refugee children in the U.S., and remote interpreting in pediatric therapy settings. Her recent projects explore simultaneous interpreting in healthcare settings in the U.S. context, healthcare interpreter briefing and debriefing practices, and healthcare interpreter attitudes toward theory and research and their role in practice.



Bio: Tatiana González-Cestari, Ph.D., CHI-Spanish Director, Language Service Advocacy, at Equiti. Tatiana González-Cestari, Ph.D., CHI-Spanish has 23 years of combined experience as a pharmacist, pharmacologist, researcher, professor, manager, and remote interpreter. Tatiana is passionate about quality, research, innovation, compliance, and cultural sensitivity. She serves as the Director of Language Service Advocacy at Equiti where she focuses on hospitals' language access best practices and impact on quality, compliance, and financial metrics. Tatiana is part of the NCIHC Policy, Education and Research committee; the SAFE AI Taskforce; and co-author of The Remote Interpreter textbook. Tatiana has mentored, developed training, presented at national and international events, published peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed articles, and lectured at various universities. Tatiana obtained her pharmacy degree and her Ph.D. in pharmacology from Universidad Central de Venezuela.



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Bio: Michelle Scott is a bilingual Registered Nurse who founded Voices For Health, Inc. She earned bachelor's degrees in Spanish and Nursing, and a master's degree in Medical Anthropology, from Michigan State University. Michelle served as President of CHIA from 2022-2024 and is a member of the NCIHC Research Work Group. Her research experience includes moderating Spanish-speaking focus groups for the National Cancer Institute, training focus group moderators in 8 languages for the National Marrow Donor Program, coordinating focus groups nationwide for a Vietnamese breast health initiative, and evaluating emergency department utilization by Spanish-speaking patients.



Bio: Rey Romero is Professor of Spanish Linguistics at the University of Houston-Downtown, where he directs the Translation BA, as well the translation minor, the interpreting minor, and the field experience course. Dr. Romero believes that sociolinguistic research should be central in ensuring language access in medical and social services, whether by incorporating linguistic concepts in interpreting and translation training, applying sociolinguistic research on the teaching of heritage languages, or by analyzing the sociolinguistic implications of language policies. He is also Adjunct Professor of Legal Spanish at the University of Houston's Law Center and has taught at Georgetown University, The University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley, Texas A&M University, University of Houston, and the University of New Orleans.



Dr. Romero was the president of the Linguistic Association of the Southwest (LASSO) for the year 2019-2020. He was awarded a Funded Faculty Leave for his research on Judeo-Spanish in 2017, and the Texas Young Lawyers' Association awarded him the President's Award of Merit in 2018 for his CLE course on Spanish for Lawyers.

Dr. Romero holds B.A.s in Spanish Language, Linguistics, and French Language from Rice University (2002), a PhD in Spanish Linguistics from Georgetown University (2009), an Advanced Professional Analytic Linguist Certificate from Montclair State University (2020), an MA in Public Health from the University of Texas-Health Science Center, with focus on Community Health Practice (2021), and an MA in Translation from Kent State University (2022). He is currently pursuing an MA in Interpreting Studies (Teaching Track) at Western Oregon University. Dr. Romero is certified by the American Translators Association (2018) and he holds a certificate in Medical Interpretation (2014) and another in Criminal Proceedings Interpretation (2017) from the Southern California School of Interpretation. He is also a licensed trainer for the Community Interpreter® (2018).

Interpreting and Autism (Workshop)

Presenter: Katherine Langan

There are a number of challenges when working with people on the autism spectrum. This presentation will focus on working with children. I will provide an overview of the autism spectrum, information about bilingualism and autism, and describe some of the challenges taking into account the National Standards of Practice for Healthcare Interpreters. Participants are encouraged to share their experiences.

Learning Objectives:

- Present basic information of the autism spectrum
- Raise awareness of the possibilities and debate on the effects of bilingualism for autistics
- Recognize the challenges of interpreting, especially in evaluation and therapy situations

Bio: Katherine Langan is a linguist who has worked as a full time or occasional translator/interpreter since 1979 starting with the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Guatemala. She has worked with various combinations of Indo-European and Mayan languages including English, Spanish, Poqomam, K'ichee', Kaqchikel, Koiné Greek, and French; and has worked as a consultant with many other languages. She has been involved in the training of interpreters and translators and has taught courses in linguistics and Spanish at a number of colleges and universities in the US and Guatemala. She earned an M.S. and Ph.D. at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. Her main graduate emphasis was sociolinguistics with secondary foci in applied and theoretical linguistics. She has a deep and abiding passion for language rights, language maintenance and the issues facing speakers of and interpreters for languages of lesser diffusion. She is working as a freelance interpreter and translator.



Enhancing the Patient Experience Through Innovations in Language Access (Workshop)

Presenters: Paul Spacek & Elias Vasquez

The concept 'Patient Experience' has become a favorite buzzword of hospital administrators, but what does it mean, how is a focus on patient experience changing the healthcare system and how does Language Access fit into these efforts? In this workshop, we will examine the concept of 'Patient Experience' and explore the many ways in which Language Services can improve the Patient Experience for LEP patients and families by improving quality and safety, facilitating effective communication, increasing accessibility, assisting with navigating the healthcare systems, addressing Social Determinants of Health, and helping to create an environment that encourages holistic, patient centered care. Our discussion will highlight various initiatives undertaken by the Children's Mercy Language and Accessibility Department aimed at enhancing services and improving patient experience. These include: Focused Improvement Workshops; Bilingual Patient Guide Program; Grow Our Own Program for Medical Interpreters; Collaborations with the Simulation Lab and Culture and Language Coaching Program; Continuing Education Workshops and Webinars; Community Outreach through our Spanish-Speaking Patient Family Advisory Council and the Center for Community Connections; Ongoing Education Efforts for hospital staff on working effectively with interpreters and LEP families. Our goal is to share our accomplishments and challenges as a starting point for a lively dialogue with attendees learning from each other as we strive to continuously improve our services and drive advancements in our field.

Learning Objectives:

- Define and Describe the concept of 'Patient Experience' in Healthcare and why it has become a focal point for health systems and how it influences the overall quality of care.
- Explore and Examine the role that Language Access plays in fostering a positive patient experience for LEP families and how ensuring effective communication and understanding can eliminate barriers and create a more inclusive healthcare environment.
- Analyze and Review initiatives undertaken by the Children's Mercy Language and Accessibility department to enhance our services and improve the patient experience.

Bio: Paul Spacek is the Education and Development Program Manager for Language Services at Children's Mercy Hospital, where he has worked for 11 years. In his role Paul serves as an instructor for interpreting students and new hires and is also involved in the development and presentation of continuing education classes and community outreach. Additionally, he designs and presents educational materials for the hospital system about how to work with interpreters and Limited English Proficient families. Paul is a nationally certified Medical Interpreter, holds a Bachelor's degree in Spanish, a certificate in Healthcare Interpreting, and a Master's degree in Adult Learning and Leadership.



Bio: Elias Vasquez is the Services Manager for Language Access and Manager of the Center for Family and Community Connections at Children's Mercy Hospital where he has worked for close to 10 years. In his role he oversees, leads, and provides direction to language services staff, students, and volunteers, ensuring optimal service delivery to staff, patients, and families by aligning personnel resources, coverage, and schedules as well as design programs, develop contracts, create ROI projections, and integrate efforts across multiple stakeholders to enhance service delivery. Elias is a nationally certified Medical Interpreter, and holds a certificate in Healthcare Interpreting and a Bachelor of Business Administration.



Developing a Medical Genetics Glossary in a Language With Few English Equivalencies (Presentation)

Presenters: Lori Williamson, MS, CGC, Lynda A. Riklon, & Ann Chou, PhD

Glossary co-authors will present the rationale and development process for the first Medical Genetics Glossary for Marshallese health interpreters. Working with the Marshallese health interpreters across several states yielded the finding that there is no Marshallese vocabulary related to genetic conditions. Improving the quality of medical genetics services for Marshallese patients cannot occur if the interpretation is inaccurate. To ameliorate this gap, in 2019, over 50 Marshallese health interpreters from the U.S. convened in Arkansas for the inaugural training of Marshallese Health Interpreters for Medical Genetics using the curriculum, "Interpreting for Pediatric Medical Genetics" in 2019. This training revealed that without Marshallese equivalencies for the English terminology, rendering an equivocal expression that all could accept and agree upon was exceedingly difficult. Moreover, a high science literacy level to understand the subtleties of the genetics terminology was required for an interpreter to independently render an accurate expression. These findings led to the development of a Marshallese Genetics Glossary. A group comprised of genetic counselors and Marshallese health interpreters met over a number of sessions and developed a comprehensive glossary of Medical Genetics terminology using an iterative, participatory process whereby Marshallese health interpreters were trained in Medical Genetics and, in turn, debated and proposed equivalent expressions. The final version was then reviewed by experts in Marshallese language, medical genetics, and a Marshallese physician. The finalized glossary included 228 terms addressing different dimensions of medical genetics and genetic counseling. The glossary will be disseminated to all Marshallese interpreters who participated, as well as those providers working within and with the Marshallese communities. The uptake and utilization of the glossary collection would assist interpreters to more accurately explain genetic disorders to affected families, bridge the language gap between English speaking clinicians and Marshallese patients, with the ultimate goal to improve access to and quality of care. Enhanced diagnoses and treatment would facilitate timely intervention that would improve clinical outcomes and quality of life.

Learning Objectives:

- Explain the unique challenges faced by interpreters in accurately conveying complex medical genetics information and the relevance of medical genetics to healthcare interpreting, especially in languages without genetics vocabulary.
- Develop and implement effective methods for gathering data on existing language resources and identifying gaps in terminology by conducting assessment of language needs.
- Describe the principles of participatory research and the importance of involving community members in all stages of the glossary development process.

Continued

Bio: Lori Williamson is a board-certified genetic counselor working in the clinical, research, education, and public health sectors of the field for 32 years. Lori has multiple, peer-reviewed publications, several of which directly address access to and quality of genetics services or novel service delivery models. Her most significant experience in the public health sector was the 20 years spent in leadership of the HRSA-funded Regional Genetics Network (RGN), specifically Heartland RGN. During this time, she built linkages between families, public health, and genetics providers, engaged “genetically” underserved communities in meaningful ways, and improved access to and quality of genetics services.



Bio: Lynda Riklon is a Community Health Worker at UAMS Institute for Community Health Innovation. Lynda is from the Marshall Islands but has lived in northwest Arkansas for the past 8 years and is a strong advocate for the COFA communities residing in Hawaii and in the continental US as well. Lynda loves to cook for her family and community!



Bio: Ann F. Chou, PhD, MPH, MA. Ann Chou, a health services researcher by training, served as the Co-Director for the HRSA-funded Heartland Regional Genetics Network (HRGN). Ann is also Chair and Professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. As a health services researcher, Ann has worked on a number of projects that studied health outcomes in populations with high social vulnerability, implementation and dissemination of best practices, and patient-centered care. The best part of her work, though, is collaborating with community partners to improve health literacy and facilitate access to care.



Natalya Mytareva, NCIHC Emcee

Natalya Mytareva, M.A., ICE-CCP, is Executive Director of the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI), and Vice Chair of the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). In 2000–2013, Natalya was Communications Director at the International Institute of Akron, a refugee resettlement agency in Ohio. She developed and taught several courses for healthcare and court interpreters, with the focus on languages of lesser diffusion. She is a recipient of the 2023 Language Access Champion award from the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care. Natalya is a Russian interpreter/translator and started her career as instructor of interpretation/translation courses at Volgograd State University (Russia) in 1991. She holds a combined BA/MA degree from VSU in Philology & Teaching English as a Foreign Language.



NCIHC would like to thank the Congress Work Group for their planning and contributions to the Congress.

Lisa Morris, Chair
Enrica J Ardemagni, Vice Chair
Wilma Alvarado-Little
Kevin Cunningham
Carla Fogaren
Tim Moriarty
Graciela Zozaya

thank
you

Technical Support

Salma Bryant, Administrative Assistant
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