One of the principal ways to ensure safe patient care is to be able to communicate effectively with our patients. Even under the best of circumstances, patients often do not understand the information we are sharing with them because they are sick or scared or medicated.

For patients who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or who have Limited English Proficiency, effective communication can be a special challenge. Professional interpreters provide an important bridge between providers and patients to help us understand what patients are telling us and what health care staff and providers are trying to communicate to them. Interpretation can be provided in a variety of ways at UVMMC.

Research has shown the critical importance and benefits of professional language interpreters in the health care environment, in terms of costs savings and patient outcomes. Untrained interpreters are more likely to make errors, violate confidentiality, and increase the risk of poor outcomes. UVMMC uses professional interpreters for both in-person and electronic modes of interpretation for patients.

The patient should be asked about the most effective communication method for their needs at each visit.

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**What You Need to Know**

- Who might need Interpreting Services in medical or mental health settings?
  - Hard of Hearing
  - Deaf
  - DeafBlind
  - Limited English Proficient

- Professional interpreters can significantly reduce negative patient outcomes and reduce costs.

- Use telephonic, remote video, or in-person interpreters for communication

- Do NOT use family members, companions or friends or bilingual staff members to interpret.

- Untrained interpreters are more likely to make errors, violate confidentiality, and increase the risk of poor outcomes.

- Medical providers with basic language skills can be used to provide comfort, but should not be offered instead of a professional interpreter.

- Devices for Video Remote Interpreting (ie IPADS) can be accessed through Patient Support at 847-2811.

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**What You Need to Do**

- Establish strong relationships with your patient.

- Flag Deaf and Limited English Proficient patients in the medical record.

- Document specific effective communication/language needs

- Incorporate visual teaching aids

- Always provide qualified professional interpreters

- Avoid ineffective methods of communication (lip reading)

- Ask the patient to repeat back what you just told them to ensure that they understand. Click here for more info: http://nchealthliteracy.org/toolkit/tool5.pdf

- During regular business hours; in person interpreters can be requested through Case Management and Social Work at 847-5826

- Call the switchboard 847-0000 on evenings, weekends, and holidays. Ask for the on call social worker

- For problems or questions regarding the technology or VRI, please call IS service center at 847-1414

- For questions on interpreting services or to arrange departmental trainings, please contact the Interpreter Coordinator at 847-0695.