



Spoken Language Health Interpreters

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
State Government Special Rev				
Expenditures		48	48	48
Net Fiscal Impact		48	48	48
FTEs		0.25	0.25	0.25

Summary

This proposal provides funding for improvements to the spoken language health interpreter registration program. There is no increase in fees associated with this proposal. Fee revenue currently being collected from interpreters will offset the cost of this appropriation increase.

Background

Since 2009, MDH has maintained a roster of spoken language health interpreters under Minnesota Statutes, section 144.058. Spoken language interpreters accompany non-English speaking patients to their medical appointments and provide interpretive services. In order for patients with limited or no English skills to have “meaningful access” to health services, federal law mandates that they be provided interpretive services. Listing on the roster is voluntary, but a state law passed in 2011 requires interpreters be listed on the roster to receive payment for Medical Assistance patients.

Participation in the registry has increased from fewer than 140 to over 3,200 interpreters. However, the initial appropriation of \$21,000 per year has never been increased to keep up with the cost of the program. As a result, the program collects significantly more fee revenue than is appropriated. The appropriation amount does not

cover costs to serve so many interpreters, which include:

- an electronic registration and payment system for interpreters,
- a website where the public can search for interpreters, and
- staff support to help interpreters sign up for the roster and access and update their information.

Proposal

The additional funds would support 0.25 full-time equivalent customer support staff in addition to the existing 0.07 full-time equivalent staff. The extra staff time would allow MDH to provide more timely and thorough assistance to interpreters seeking to join the roster. This is important to ensure that interpreters who speak English as a second language or who have limited computer skills can get the assistance they need to be listed on the roster. The increase will also be used to collect and display more information about interpreters’ education, training, and qualifications so the public can make more informed decisions when choosing an interpreter.

For more information, contact:

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