

Comments and Responses on ARC 7938B  
Addition of Medicaid Fee for Translation and Interpretation Services  
Received August 23, 2009

The following persons and organizations provided written comments, which are included in the summary below:

JaNan Less, MS, Scott County Health Department  
Eileen Tosh, I-Smile coordinator, Johnson County Public Health

COMMENT: With the continued increase in the number of clients needing translation services and the inability to recover the full cost with the current method of reimbursement, we support this proposal. The reimbursement of translation services alone rather than a component of the costing process for other services will allow us to better recover our expenses. (Less)

RESPONSE: The IME is pleased that we can provide this new service to assist in getting services appropriately to members.

COMMENT: I think the money would be better spent on English language classes for new immigrants. If they want to live in our country-they need to learn the language. If I moved to a foreign country I would learn the language of that country. Why is this any different?

It will be more helpful in the long run to teach English than to spend money on interpreters. These people are going to have to interact with employers, landlords, merchants, banks, schools, neighbors, doctors, pharmacies, etc. It will be more beneficial and more cost effective to teach Basic English. We have people who speak 20 different languages come to our agency on a weekly basis. The cost of providing interpreter services will be outrageous.

Teach them English-they will be better served and our state will benefit from having a better educated workforce. (Tosh)

RESPONSE: Many would agree that spending on teaching English is an activity that is important. The fact before us is that many persons who are eligible for Medicaid services do not speak English with a degree of competence that allows for the delivery of that service. Therefore, our task is to make every effort to assure that medical services are provided to the best extent possible. We believe that the addition of this payable service will allow practitioners to provide those services with the best possibility of being accurate and timely in the provision of medical care.