



Goodhue County  
**Health and Human Services**

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June 10, 2024

TO: Personnel Committee

FROM: Nina Arneson, Director  
Kris Johnson, Deputy Director

RE: Pilot Project  
Bilingual Pay Process

Communicating directly and effectively with the people we serve is central to providing strong and effective customer service. Goodhue County is in the process of reviewing and eventually adopting a new Limited English Proficiency Plan. This draft LEP plan states:

Language assistance will be provided through use of **competent bilingual staff**, staff interpreters, contracts or formal arrangements with local organizations providing interpretation or translation services, or technology and telephonic interpretation services (emphasis added).

To ensure that the staff who have bilingual skills have the necessary degree of competence, a certification process is necessary.

GCHHS recently tracked the number of times in a 2-week period that HHS staff needed to utilize an interpreter and/or communicate directly with clients who speak Spanish. Some of these interactions were completed with an interpreter, and some were completed with staff who speak Spanish and could communicate directly.

- Between 5-20-24 and 6-4-24 there were 24 separate interactions with HHS staff during which Spanish was spoken.
  - 50% of the interactions were via phone and averaged 14 minutes per phone ca.l.
  - 25% of the interactions were in person and averaged 42 minutes per visit.
  - 25% of the interactions were with walk-in clients and averaged 5 minutes per visit.

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GCHHS has created a DRAFT policy to utilize as part of a pilot program to have bilingual employees go through an assessment process that examines their language proficiency.

- When a GCHHS employee is proficient in a language other than English, and it is determined that this employee has a **work need** to use that language on a regular basis, the unit supervisor may offer that the employee can complete the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) assessment at no cost to the employee.
- The test is administered by Language Testing International, an organization that conducts measurement of language proficiency to many government organizations including some counties in the SE region.
- This process takes approximately 30 minutes for the employee to complete, results are received in a few days, and the cost is less than \$100/employee tested.
  - <https://www.languagetesting.com/>
- If the employee receives an Advanced, Superior, or Distinguished rating level on the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) as administered by Language Testing International, those employees will qualify for bilingual pay.
  - The proposed rate for this pilot project is additional \$1.50/hour given in increments of no less than 15 minutes per client interaction.

Currently, there are four GCHHS employees who have some degree of Spanish proficiency.

We propose that GCHHS implement this policy for 6 months and report back to the board with the utilization and satisfaction with the process.



## **HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES Administration**

### **Policy D-190**

#### **Bilingual Pay Process**

##### **Policy**

Goodhue County's Limited English Proficiency Plan states that GCHHS will aid all customers with LEP in obtaining necessary interpreter services in order to effectively communicate with staff. Customers will be provided with meaningful access to programs and services in a timely manner and at no cost to the customer. The LEP Plan further states that where applicable, and as a program practice, GCHHS will use its efforts to assign clients with LEP to bilingual staff who speak their language.

To that end, GCHHS will take steps to recruit, train, and compensate bilingual staff.

##### **Guidelines**

When a GCHHS employee is proficient in a language other than English, and it is determined that this employee has a **work need** to use that language on a regular basis, the unit supervisor may offer that the employee can complete the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) assessment at no cost to the employee. If the employee receives an Advanced, Superior, or Distinguished rating level on the OPI, the employee is able to use the Bilingual Service code in ADP, which allows for a reimbursement of an additional \$1.50/hour for time spent on work duties while speaking the non-English language. HR will be informed of the employee's status and a copy of the results will be placed in the personnel file. If the employee does not receive one of the required (Advanced, Superior) rating levels on the OPI assessment, they can retest after 90 days or up to two times in a 365-day window.

An employee is exempt from the OPI assessment if they are a certified interpreter and provide a certificate that states "pass" through one of the following agencies: American Translators Association (ATA). National Board of Certified Medical Interpreters, Certification Commission for Health Care Interpreters (CCHI) or NIC through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID).

##### **Process**

1. Supervisor and employee agree that using the second language is a work need for the employee's current position. Supervisor fills out Bilingual Pay Approval Form and submits to Director for signature. Director signs and saves form.
2. Administrative Aide contacts employee to set up exam through LTI.
3. If employee receives Advanced or Superior score, Admin Aide will Bilingual Pay Form with HHS Finance to set up ADP, and with HR for the employee's personnel file.

*Include Attachments from LTI*