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**HOUSE BILL 2004**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2022 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Dufault and Schmick

AN ACT Relating to providing spoken language interpreters for medical appointments when the original spoken language interpreter fails to appear; and amending RCW 39.26.300.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 39.26.300 and 2019 c 266 s 24 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The department of social and health services, the department of children, youth, and families, and the health care authority are each authorized to purchase interpreter services on behalf of limited English-speaking applicants and recipients of public assistance.

(2) The department of labor and industries is authorized to purchase interpreter services for medical and vocational providers authorized to provide services to limited English-speaking injured workers or crime victims.

(3) No later than September 1, 2020, the department of social and health services, the department of children, youth, and families, the health care authority, and the department of labor and industries must purchase in-person spoken language interpreter services directly from language access providers as defined in RCW 74.04.025, or through limited contracts with scheduling and coordinating delivery organizations, or both. Each state agency must have at least one contract with an entity that provides interpreter services through telephonic and video remote technologies. Nothing in this section precludes the department of labor and industries from purchasing in-person spoken language interpreter services directly from language access providers or from directly reimbursing language access providers.

(4) Notwithstanding subsection (3) of this section, the department of labor and industries may pay a language access provider directly for the costs of interpreter services when the services are necessary for use by a medical provider for emergency or urgent care, or where the medical provider determines that advanced notice is not feasible.

(5) Upon the expiration of any contract in effect on June 7, 2018, but no later than September 1, 2020, the department must develop and implement a model that all state agencies must use to procure spoken language interpreter services by purchasing directly from language access providers or through contracts with scheduling and coordinating entities, or both. The department must have at least one contract with an entity that provides interpreter services through telephonic and video remote technologies. If the department determines it is more cost-effective or efficient, it may jointly purchase these services with the department of social and health services, the department of children, youth, and families, the health care authority, and the department of labor and industries as provided in subsection (3) of this section. The department of social and health services, the department of children, youth, and families, the health care authority, and the department of labor and industries have the authority to procure interpreters through the department if the demand for spoken language interpreters cannot be met through their respective contracts.

(6) All interpreter services procured under this section must be provided by language access providers who are certified or authorized by the state, or nationally certified by the certification commission for health care interpreters or the national board for certification of medical interpreters. When a nationally certified, state-certified, or authorized language access provider is not available, a state agency is authorized to contract with a spoken language interpreter with other certifications or qualifications deemed to meet agency needs. Nothing in this subsection precludes providing interpretive services through state employees or employees of medical or vocational providers.

(7) For medical appointments, if a spoken language interpreter assigned by a contractor procured under this section fails to appear for a scheduled appointment, the medical provider may provide its own spoken language interpreter. If a medical provider provides a spoken language interpreter under this subsection, the medical provider shall be reimbursed by the relevant state agency at the same rate as the contractor that assigned the original spoken language interpreter that failed to appear. If any part of this subsection conflicts with the provisions of chapter 41.56 RCW, this subsection shall control.

(8) Nothing in this section is intended to address how state agencies procure interpreters for sensory-impaired persons.

((~~(8)~~)) (9) For purposes of this section, "state agency" means any state office or activity of the executive branch of state government, including state agencies, departments, offices, divisions, boards, commissions, and correctional and other types of institutions, but excludes institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, the school for the blind, and the Washington center for deaf and hard of hearing youth.

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