

SUCCESS STORY

Adding video remote interpreting to address language service needs



OVERVIEW

Banner Health is one of the largest nonprofit healthcare systems in the country, with 28 acute-care hospitals and a growing number of health clinics across seven Western states. Hospitals range from 25 beds to medical centers with more than 700 beds, and on an average year, Banner Health uses interpreters for more than 100 languages. As a leading provider of care in the communities it serves, Banner Health is dedicated to fulfilling the mission of making a difference in people's lives with excellent patient care.

THE CHALLENGE

Banner Health was facing several challenges with its existing language service program. One specific issue it faced was standardizing the program across all of its facilities to ensure that communication between a patient and provider was clear and effective.

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Busy healthcare providers would often use an interpreter who was available – even if that meant a family member or another staff member who spoke a patient’s language. In addition to increased liability for the health system, this created concerns regarding whether all information was being accurately communicated to patients.

In some cases it was even leading to delays in care, misdiagnosis, or increased complications and unnecessary readmissions to the emergency department when a patient did not understand discharge instructions. Health system administrators knew they had to address these quality and safety issues along with the increasing costs of on-site interpreters. They decided to make a change.

THE SOLUTION

To better support its mission, Banner Health partnered with InDemand Interpreting to implement a program that balanced its language service mix. The administrators wanted to ensure that every provider had

access to an interpreter in a timely and efficient manner. By adding video remote interpreting (VRI) to its language service mix, Banner now has immediate access to medically trained interpreters. In addition to the use of VRI, Banner also has bilingual staff, on-site interpreters, translation services, and over-the-phone interpreters, all of which provide an effective balance of language options to best serve patients and providers.

THE RESULTS

Today Banner Health has interpreters available 24 hours a day, seven days a week in 17 spoken languages, including American Sign Language. According to Elizabeth Swan, risk management consultant at Banner Health, the health system has dramatically increased its use of qualified interpreters using VRI, trained staff interpreters, and over-the-phone interpreters. However, by adjusting the language service mix, the system has been able to drastically decrease expenses and improve satisfaction among patients,

staff, and physicians. These changes have also led to a reduced risk of miscommunication with patients and family and compliance with federal and Joint Commission requirements.

The VRI service has enabled substantial benefits for both deaf and limited-English-proficiency patients, providing effective access to an interpreter within seconds over a secure network that is a fraction of the cost of the previous on-site interpreters.

“Since we partnered with InDemand Interpreting and added VRI, we have seen an increase in the number of times an interpreter is used, which reduces overall risk and improves patient satisfaction,” said Swan. “VRI provides many benefits and is economical. Using our own telecommunications network, we know it is secure. At the click of an icon, clinicians have access to an interpreter within seconds.”

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