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PA06-02

MEMORANDUM

TO: Health Benefits Administrators of Participating Agencies
FROM: Employee Benefits Division
SUBJECT: Using Language Line Services
DATE: February 22, 2006

Do you have an enrollee for whom English is a second language or who simply needs help understanding English? The Employee Benefits Division's Language Line Service (LLS) is just a phone call away. LLS is an over-the-phone language translation service EBD makes available to assist limited English-speaking enrollees calling with questions about their health benefits. With over 150 languages available, an LLS interpreter can immediately help you communicate with the enrollee, whether the enrollee is at home, in your office or in another work location.

In a phone call with you, the enrollee, and the EBD representative, the LLS interpreter listens to your limited English-speaking enrollee, analyzes the message and conveys its meaning to both you and the enrollee. Interpreters do not interpret word-for-word, but meaning-for-meaning. They may use several phrases instead of words to accurately describe what the enrollee is asking or saying.

For active employees and retirees of Participating Agencies: If an enrollee speaks a language other than English, follow these steps to effectively work with both the interpreter and enrollee.

1. Call the Program Services Unit (PSU) of the Employee Benefits Division at 518-485-5998 if you need assistance with the subject of the call. The EBD representative will call an interpreter for you and the enrollee. If you just need access to the Language Line service, call the Help Line for HBAs at 518-457-2364. NOTE: Since phone systems and circumstances may vary, it may be advisable to call EBD ahead of time to discuss the best way to conference in all necessary parties to the call.
2. Language Line is the industry leader in call connect time and, typically, the interpreter is on the line within 30 seconds. The call begins for you, the enrollee, the EBD representative, and the interpreter. Once you and the enrollee are connected with an interpreter, the EBD representative will disconnect if not needed.
3. The interpreter will identify the enrollee's native language and translate for each of the individuals on the phone. There are thousands of skilled LLS interpreters that know the most frequently requested languages and will promptly help you complete the call.

An authorized representative can also call on behalf of the enrollee, however, the representative must first complete, sign and submit a HIPAA form to EBD.

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Please display the enclosed poster in your office so that enrollees and other personnel know that this service is available. The January 2006 *Empire Plan Reports* include a brief article about LLS, so you may receive calls about this service. For more information about Language Line, visit their web site at www.language-line.com.

NOTE: For HBAs in the Capital District, a Language Line training session will be offered on Thursday, March 30, 2006, at the Department of Civil Service in Building 1A, Classroom 2. The session will run from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. If you want to attend this training, please obtain supervisory approval and call Pam Lamb, EBD Communications, 518-457-5130, by **March 28** to reserve your spot.

If you have questions about LLS or need help accessing the service, please contact EBD Communications at 518-457-7577. Thanks for your support and interest in Language Line Services!

Enclosure