



NEWS RELEASE

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Catholic Healthcare West Expands Language Access Initiative

Healthcare Provider Receives \$420,000 Grant to Train Medical Interpreters in 86 Facilities

San Francisco, CA – January 30, 2008 – Catholic Healthcare West (CHW), the eighth largest hospital system in the nation, today announced an expansion of its Language Access Initiative to improve communication between health professionals and patients at its hospitals and health clinics.

“We exist to provide excellent, compassionate and affordable healthcare that meets the physical, spiritual and cultural needs of the communities we serve,” said Lloyd H. Dean, CHW President/CEO. “With the expansion of this vital service we are investing in our employees and strengthening the commitment we’ve made to our patients to provide care that is effective, understandable and respectful of cultural health beliefs, practices and preferred languages.”

Through its Qualified Medical Interpreter Program, CHW will test and train bilingual staff to serve as interpreters at its 41 hospitals and 45 health clinics in California, Arizona, and Nevada. Interpreter services have been available at all CHW hospitals for many years, and more recently through the system-wide use of special telephones and video technology. However, face-to-face interaction is preferred and more appropriate for certain circumstances.

With an initial grant from The California Endowment, the program completed its pilot phase in 2007. CHW recently received an additional \$420,000 two-year grant from The California Endowment which will enable the program to expand across the entire CHW network of hospitals and clinics.

“It is critical that healthcare providers address any cultural or language barriers that prevent healthcare consumers from accessing primary and preventive care,” said Robert K. Ross, M.D., president and CEO of The California Endowment. “Access to qualified medical interpreters not only results in improved health outcomes for California’s diverse healthcare consumers, but also improves their access to quality healthcare.”

In order to become a qualified medical interpreter, CHW employees must complete an assessment for their proficiency in verbal and written skills and a training course to understand the cultural, ethical, legal and regulatory issues necessary to properly interact with patients of different cultures and languages.

While federal and state laws require healthcare organizations to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care, CHW’s initiative exceeds the mandate by ensuring that staff are properly tested and medically qualified to interpret on behalf of patients and their caregivers. Future goals of the initiative

include the collection of patient race and ethnicity data to improve quality of care, health outcomes and patient satisfaction.

Last year, CHW hospitals treated patients who requested interpretation services for 94 languages, other than English. Although 80 percent of CHW's non-English speaking patients speak Spanish, the program will also focus on these top-requested languages: Russian, Cantonese, Mandarin, Armenian, Vietnamese, Hmong, Tagalog, Cambodian, and Korean.

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About Catholic Healthcare West

Catholic Healthcare West (CHW) is the eighth largest hospital system in the nation and the largest hospital provider in California. Founded in 1986, the CHW network of more than 8,500 physicians and approximately 50,000 employees serve a population spanning 22 million people at 41 hospitals across California, Arizona, and Nevada. CHW is committed to delivering compassionate, high-quality, affordable healthcare services with special attention to the poor and underserved. In 2007, CHW provided \$922 million in charity care, community benefits, and unreimbursed patient care. For more information, please visit our website at chwHEALTH.org.