



For Immediate Release

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Health Care Interpreter Program Celebrates 16th Anniversary

Model training program builds bridges and greater access to health care for persons with non- or limited- English proficiency

SAN FRANCISCO—The multiple-award-winning Health Care Interpreter Certificate Program, a City College of San Francisco and Kaiser Permanente community education partnership, celebrates 16 years of serving the community by training qualified interpreters and advocating for the reduction of racial, ethnic, and linguistic disparities in health care.

City College will honor its newest graduates on May 19 at the main campus cafeteria with an extended graduation-anniversary ceremony starting at 10 a.m. Since 1997, over 750 health care interpreters have graduated from the local program and many of them are now serving non/limited-English speaking communities throughout the Bay Area. These multicultural & multilingual professionals represent a wide diversity of languages including Arabic, Burmese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Mongolian, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese, Amharic and Tigrinya. Since the 10th anniversary, this program provided technical assistance to other community colleges on its curriculum, and Berkeley City College, American River College, and College of the Sequoias all started their HCI Certificate programs. Prior to that, Mt. San Antonio College and Reedly College had also started their programs based on the City College Health Care Interpreter Certificate Program.

In light of Healthcare Reform, Affordable Care Act, and demographic changes, the need for well-trained, qualified, culturally & linguistically competent health care interpreters continues to grow. In San Francisco, nearly half of the population speaks a language other than English, and many of them are non- or limited-English speakers. In Alameda and Contra Costa counties respectively, nearly one-third and one-fourth of the population speaks languages other than English.

While the training program now opens a new career path to students with multicultural & multilingual skills, the fundamental objective of providing language access to ensure quality and equitable health care has become more relevant than ever before. Federal, state and independent regulatory agencies are increasingly requiring health care providers to offer interpreting services to patients with limited-English proficiency.

“The importance of ensuring equitable, patient-centered, and safe care has been our motivation all along. Education and training in healthcare interpreting is critical when it comes to concerning patients’ safety. This program prepares our graduates with the necessary skill-sets so that they are ready to join the workforce in closing the gaps in healthcare disparity,” said Gayle Tang, Kaiser Permanente Senior Director of National Linguistic & Diversity Infrastructure Team, and cofounder of the Health Care Interpreter Certificate Program.

The program has been recognized through two recent awards that Kaiser Permanente received for innovation and community leadership. These awards by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) and the

America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP) validate the work of the trained professionals who facilitate communication between patients and their English-speaking health care providers.

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