Language, Culture, and Patient Advocacy of the Bilingual Health Care Professional:

Standards of Practice and Competency

- Working Document -

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Common Ground International, LLC
PO Box 174, Lafayette, CO 80026
Ph: (303) 684-5557 | 1 (888) 879-2575
www.CommonGroundInternational.com

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Language, Culture, and Patient Advocacy of the Bilingual Health Care Professional: Standards of Practice and Competency

**This is a working document**
Catheryn Phipps Orive M.A., M.Ed.

Within the health care field, the bilingual professional may take on different roles depending on the context and objectives of the patient interaction. Quality care communication entails competency on the part of the care provider to not only communicate information to the patient but also to evaluate the patient’s understanding of the communicated message and facilitate the patients’ informed decision-making process to the best of her or his ability. This requires skillful listening and comprehension on the part of the care professional as well as cultural sensitivity, knowledge, and navigation. For these skills to be measured for competency, five Essential Standards have been developed. To facilitate evaluation, certain Professional Roles have been identified for these Standards along with their corresponding Cognitive Tasks. The Communicative Pathway has also been labeled to better define the performance and skills required for communication in different settings and for different purposes. Finally, two distinct Competency Levels have been defined to demarcate the graded level of performance that lead to the Professional Competency level required for certification, outlined below. A glossary of key terms is included at the end of the section describing the standards.

The five essential standards for the bilingual health care professional within this program are, **Standard 1 Patient and Care Professional Interaction, Standard 2 Skilled Presentational Ability, Standard 3 Critical Listening, Standard 4 Critical Reading, and Standard 5 Cultural Navigation.** The core certification program uses **Standard 2, Skilled Presentational Ability,** in its oral expression and there is a corresponding standard for the written expression of this skill available for those organizations or professionals who require evaluation of professional writing in Spanish.

Catheryn Phipps Orive, MA, MEd, is responsible for developing these Standards of Practice for Bilingual Health Care Professionals and the accompanying Certification Program Assessment instruments for Common Ground International. Inquiries can be sent to cphippsorive@commongroundinternational.com. This version (2014) of the Standards is a working document.

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Standard 1: Patient and Care Professional Interaction

Role: Health care professional as Facilitator

Cognitive Task: Meaning Construction

Communicative Pathway: Direct Person to Person

Competency Level: At or Above Professional

At this competency level the professional will in Spanish:

• Express him or herself fluidly and without hesitation,
• Facilitate understanding of patient health, well being, and care options,
• Engage with patients on multiple topics related to health, family and professional life, and any others, which may impact the patient-provider relationship and patient care over time.

Performance indicators:

Besides communicating fluently in Spanish, the care professional will use Spanish to evaluate what patients do and do not understand in a given health care scenario, ask and answer questions, and engage in other relevant tasks, to provide patients with opportunities to:

a. Demonstrate understanding of their health context
b. Recognize health care options
c. Make connections between health behavior, decisions, and outcomes
d. Make choices and maximize resources within the health care arena
e. Develop their knowledge of, and direct participation in, the improvement of their quality of care
Standard 2: Skilled Presentational Ability

Role: Health care professional as Resource Person

Cognitive Task: Knowledge Sharing

Communicative Pathway: Oral Presentational

Competency Level: At or Above Professional

At this competency level the professional will in Spanish:

- Create and deliver well organized presentations *
- Conduct orientations on multiple topics related to the patient care context and health education
- Present information relevant to different areas of patient care and the local health care system in general

Performance indicators:

In Spanish the care professional will use theme appropriate terminology to fluidly present information and orient patients on given health topics that support patient access to services in the local health care context which may include the following topics, among others:

a. Health care choices and treatment options
b. Health conditions
c. Patient resources and financial services
d. Diet and nutrition
e. Community outreach programs
f. Family health and wellness
g. Substance abuse treatment
h. Counseling services
Standard 3: Critical Listening
Role: Health care professional as Inquirer
Cognitive Task: Information Analysis & Synthesis
Communicative Pathway: Listening for understanding
Competency Level: At or Above Professional

At this competency level the professional will in Spanish:

- Understand the main ideas and supporting details from oral accounts spoken by patients and others
- Follow personal stories and descriptions spoken in different modes and with varied vocabulary and syntax from patients and other people involved in the patient situation
- Understand patient related care communication from other specialists, including video and audio recordings

Performance indicators:
The care professional will demonstrate understanding of spoken Spanish by restating communication and asking for additional information from patients or others who may be able to provide relevant and patient related information concerning a topic, and show good listening behavior by communicating empathy in culturally appropriate ways. In Spanish, the professional will:

- Restate patient communication to verify the accuracy of communicated information
- Ask clarifying questions to extend knowledge and information gathering
- Summarize the information conveyed in the patient communication
- Use culturally appropriate phrases and oral communication techniques to show empathy with patients
Standard 4: Critical Reading

Role: Health care professional as Inquirer

Cognitive Task: Information Analysis & Synthesis

Communicative Pathway: Reading for understanding

Competency Level: At or Above Professional

At this competency level the professional will in Spanish:

- Learn and obtain information from texts written in the target language
- Understand and summarize main ideas and supporting details in texts related to patient care
- Follow personal stories, descriptions, and questions written in different modes and with varied vocabulary and syntax from patients and other people involved in the patient situation
- Understand patient related care communication from other specialists
- Navigate and summarize health related documents and research of length written in a variety of modes, including those on unfamiliar topics

Performance indicators:
The care professional will demonstrate understanding of written Spanish by summarizing texts, explaining details contained in the text, and asking for additional information from patients or others, who may be able to provide relevant information concerning the topic referred to in the text as well as other necessary and connected information. As appropriate to the context, and when needed, in Spanish the professional will:

- Restate the written communication to verify the accuracy of information
- Ask clarifying questions to extend knowledge and information gathering
- Summarize the information conveyed in the text either orally or in writing
- Explain details contained in the text to the patient or other related care scenario participants and stakeholders
- Use culturally appropriate phrases and oral communication techniques to show empathy and sensitivity with patients when discussing the written text or details contained in it.
**Standard 5: Cultural Navigation**

**Role:** Health care professional as *Mediator*

**Cognitive Task:** *Social Leadership*

**Communicative Pathway:** *All*

**Competency Level:** *At or Above Professional*

**At this competency level the professional will:**
- Consistently utilize culturally relevant understanding and behavior to enhance patient care provision
- Facilitate patient empowerment within the health care arena and improve care access
- Act as a patient advocate and mentor
- Identify and communicate patient resources with patients and other relevant stakeholders
- Learn about a patient’s cultural beliefs and needs to improve quality of care and access to services
- Provide feedback and information relevant for patient navigation of health care resources and knowledge in the local health care context
- Act as cultural navigator in the health care context to improve understanding between people

**Performance indicators:**

To facilitate better access and quality of care for patients, the care professional will **accomplish the objectives of cultural navigator** through engaging successfully in the following **activities** related to the above tasks:

- Use knowledge of culturally appropriate body language and social norms, including physical gestures, eye contact, and social role representation with patients
- Accommodate patients’ varying beliefs and assumptions underlying concepts of health and the human body with the purpose of improving care and collaboration through understanding
- Assist patients and other stakeholders in finding and using community and health care resources to enhance patient engagement and responsibility in the health care context

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Performance Indicators continued:

• Provide resources and educate patients on cultural and logistical processes that will improve patient navigation through the local health care system.

• Provide information and educate other professionals about the cultural practices, norms, and forms of communication related to patients which will enhance overall communication, access, and quality care for Limited English Proficient (LEP) patients and their families.

• Make relevant and appropriate inquiries about the cultural beliefs of patients that may impact health care provision.

• Ask questions and give feedback to patients about their knowledge of the health care system to ensure patient understanding and improved engagement in the care process.

• Help other care professionals bridge cultural differences to facilitate understanding between people and scaffold the smoother provision of quality care.
Glossary of Key Terms

**Bilingualism** – Pertaining to the cognitive incorporation of two language systems for the purpose of communication.

**Bilingual Health Care Professional** - A trained health care worker who demonstrates functional to fluent communicative competency in two languages for communication with LEP patients and other stakeholders and professionals within the health care context.

**Fluency** – A cognitive-linguistic skill marker used to indicate the capacity to communicate in a language without pauses that might impede meaning. Does **not** denote varying degrees of inherent lexical sophistication or syntactic complexity.

**Professional Competency** – Demonstrated skill and knowledge proficiency within a specific area of remunerated activity, measurable at distinct levels.

**Quality Care Communication** – Communication with patients within a comprehensive framework which entails the sharing of knowledge, and evaluation and scaffolding of patients’ understanding of the health care situation to enhance engagement, responsible decision making, and informed action.
Partial Bibliography


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