

# Medical Interpreter



## What do they do?

Medical Interpreters help health providers to communicate with their patients across language barriers. They are present in the exam room and must be comfortable discussing sensitive or personal issues while keeping patient confidentiality and ethics in mind. An in-depth knowledge of medical terminology and the subtle differences between both languages is required.

## Where do they work?

Most Medical Interpreters work in a variety of healthcare settings and can work with nurses, technicians, physicians and other medical staff. Some interpreter services are offered over the phone or video, if an in-person interpreter is not available.

## Pay:

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average yearly income for Medical Interpreters is \$45,430.



## Education:

Proficiency in both English and a foreign language is necessary to begin Medical Interpreter training. After completing 24+ semester hours of college level credit, a student must complete a minimum 40 hours of training.

Those seeking National Interpreter Certification in American Sign Language (ASL) should have a bachelor's degree prior to taking the certification exam.

## Medical Interpreter & ASL training in Wisconsin:

Madison College (offers both):  
[www.madisoncollege.edu](http://www.madisoncollege.edu)

Milwaukee Area Technical College (offers both):  
[www.matc.edu/health\\_sciences](http://www.matc.edu/health_sciences)

High School students interested in becoming a Medical Interpreter should take classes that focus on English writing and comprehension, computer skills, and foreign language. It is also helpful to spend time in a foreign country and learn about their culture.

## Accreditation:

Medical Interpreter education programs for foreign language are accredited by the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI).

[www.cchicertification.org](http://www.cchicertification.org)

Education programs for sign language are accredited by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf:

[www.rid.org](http://www.rid.org)

## Certification & Registry:

After meeting all prerequisites a student must pass both a written and an oral exam to become a Certified Medical Interpreter (CMI) in any language.

The Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI) administers both exams:

[www.cchicertification.org](http://www.cchicertification.org)

The National Interpreter Certification (NIC) exam for American Sign Language Interpretation is administered by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. There are a variety of other certification options available to serve different needs of those who are deaf or have varying levels of hearing loss. Learn more at:

[www.rid.org](http://www.rid.org)

ASL interpreters must also register with the state of Wisconsin:

[www.dsps.wi.gov](http://www.dsps.wi.gov)

## Professional Association:

Certified Medical Interpreters for both foreign language and ASL can join the National Council on Interpreting in Healthcare (NCIHC):

[www.ncihc.org](http://www.ncihc.org)



## Job Outlook:

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment for Medical Interpreters and Translators is expected to grow 46 percent between 2012-2022, which is much faster than the average across all occupations.

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2014-15 Edition*, Interpreter and Translators:  
<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/interpreters-and-translators.htm>

