

**SHIAWASSEE COUNTY COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITY**  
**POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL**

Section: Clinical  
Policy Number: 71  
Subject: **Accommodations for Cultural  
Competency, Limited English  
Proficiency and Communications**

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**Policy**

It is the policy of Shiawassee County Community Mental Health Authority (SCCMHA) that all services reflect an ongoing commitment to accommodate cultural and linguistic diversity to ensure access and meaningful participation for all people in the service area. This includes accommodations for alternative communication methods.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to comply with federal and state requirements to promote the delivery of services in a competent manner to all enrollees, including those with limited English proficiency, diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and special communication needs.

**Applicability**

This policy applies to all SCCMHA staff and contract providers.

**Definitions**

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): The inability to speak, read, write or understand English at a level that permits effective interaction with health care providers. LEP is the responsibility of providers of health and social services who receive Federal Financial Assistance for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Accommodations: Internal or external resources needed to ensure the consumer is afforded meaningful access to services at no cost to the consumer. Examples include augmentative communication specialists, voice interpreters, interpreter/translation services, etc.

Cultural Competency: An ongoing process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to all people in a manner that recognizes, affirms and values diverse populations.

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Population eligible for, or likely impacted by the program or services: Those persons who are in the geographic area that has been approved as the service provider's service area, and who are either eligible for benefits or services provided by the entity or otherwise are directly affected by such an entity's policies and practices. An example is a parent who is seeking services for a child. The child is the one who is eligible for services but the parent is also impacted by the entity's policies and practices.

**Procedure**

Cultural Competency/ Limited English Proficiency

1. SCCMHA, in collaboration with the PIHP, will implement a method of community assessment that:
  - Identifies all non-English languages and ethnic and cultural backgrounds that their programs are likely to encounter by estimating the number of LEP persons and persons from other cultures who are eligible for services. Identification can take place by using census data, consumer utilization data from consumer files and data from school systems, community agencies and organizations.
  - Identifies the language and cultural needs of each consumer and records this information in the consumer's file.
  - Identifies the points of contact where language and other assistance is needed by persons eligible for services.
  - Identifies the resources needed to provide effective language assistance, the availability and location of resources and the arrangements needed to make access to these resources efficient and timely.
2. SCCMHA is committed to providing services in a manner that respects language and cultural diversity. Every effort will be made to ensure that agency interactions with persons with LEP or cultural differences are as effective as its interactions with others. This includes affirmative efforts to ensure the cultural competency of provider staff. including:
  - Policies and procedures for obtaining and providing trained and competent interpreters and other language assistance services.
  - Identification, development and implementation of a plan to provide written materials in languages other than English when a significant number or percentage of the population eligible for services will need information in those languages.

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- For the determination of significant language differences in the PIHP region, SCCMHA will use the definitions from the reference, “Policy Guidance, Title VI Prohibition against National Origin Discrimination as It Affects Persons with Limited English Proficiency,” and the PIHP “LEP Analysis From the 2000 Census.” See related attachments.

The Federal policy of guidance includes the following as examples of vital written documents:

- Consent forms
  - Letters containing information regarding participation in a program or service.
  - Notices pertaining to the reduction, denial or termination of services or benefits.
  - Communications on the right to appeal actions or that require a response from the consumer.
  - Notices advising the consumer of the availability of free language assistance in all non-English languages that affiliate can reasonably expect to encounter.
3. In collaboration with the PIHP, SCCMHA will develop and implement a method of service assessment and monitoring to ensure that current policies and procedures related to language proficiency and cultural competency are effective and viable. Assessment and monitoring will take place at least annually and will:
- Seek feedback from consumers and employees.
  - Review the current LEP and cultural diversity of the service area.
  - Determine whether staff is knowledgeable about LEP and cultural competency policies and procedures and how to implement them.
4. All new staff will receive, during orientation, training on cultural competence and LEP policies and procedures. Annually staff will receive ongoing training in LEP policies and procedures. Affiliates will maintain documentation of training that includes the staff person’s name and the dates of training. The components of the training shall include:

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- An overview of the LEP policies and procedures.
  - An overview of cultural competency policies and procedures
  - Overall awareness of cultural competency and issues involved, including, but not limited to, ethnic/racial backgrounds, gender culturalization, socioeconomic/education status, sexual orientation, physical capacity, age, spiritual/religious beliefs, regional perspectives and multi-cultural influences.
5. SCCMHA, in collaboration with the PIHP will evaluate the overall effectiveness of cultural competency and language proficiency efforts through monitoring and periodic evaluation. Monitoring will explore whether the current cultural and linguistic competencies of the service provider accurately reflect the diversity of the service area. Annual monitoring for outcomes will also include information on consumer grievances related to LEP and cultural competency.

#### Alternative Communication Formats

1. SCCMHA will provide programs and services in a manner that assures those programs and services are equally accessible to all individuals using alternative methods of communication.
2. SCCMHA will present materials in a manner appropriate to the individual's condition and ability to understand. They shall provide all informational materials in a manner and format that is easily understood and is written at a fourth grade reading level (it is understood that some necessary information such as diagnosis, medication and conditions may not meet this criteria).
3. SCCMHA will make available written materials and vital documents in alternative formats that address the special needs of consumers, at no cost to the consumer. For example, providing materials and vital documents in Braille or on audio tapes for consumers who have an impairment that impacts their ability to effectively communicate due to limitations in vision or hearing.
4. SCCMHA will have procedures in place for educating and training staff regarding the availability and processes to obtain information in alternative formats.

#### Attachments

- a. Policy Guidance, Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination As It Affects Persons With Limited English Proficiency
- b. LEP Analysis From 2000 Census



