



## “Bridging the Gap” Medical Interpreter Training Comes to Michigan

**By Jane Chang Miller**  
**CCHCP-Authorized Bridging the Gap Trainer**

Has this ever happened to you? As a Michigan-based medical interpreter, you’d like to develop your skills through interpreter training. So you google “interpreter training course,” and two million entries pop up. But unfortunately, only a few are actual training courses – and they’re all online or in distant states.

Thanks to UMHS Interpreter Services, this problem is a thing of the past. In 2007, we became a licensed provider of Bridging the Gap, the country’s premier medical interpreter training program. A 40-hour curriculum designed by the Cross Cultural Health Care Program, Bridging the Gap teaches the skills and knowledge that are fundamental to our profession. Last January, I became an authorized Bridging the Gap trainer. So far this year, I’ve led two successful courses, right here in Ann Arbor. Thirty-four interpreters have already graduated. The training covers:

- \* Basic interpreting skills, including interpreting modes and roles, interpreter ethics, and guidelines on intervening.
- \* Information on health care, with explanations of the U.S. health care system, anatomy, basic procedures, and how doctors think.
- \* The importance of culture in interpreting, including self-awareness of cultural influences, traditional health care practices, and how to be a culture-broker.
- \* Communication skills for advocacy, including listening skills, communication styles, and guidelines for appropriate advocacy.

The course also features presentations from guest speakers. Dr. Karen Hall, associate professor at the U of M Medical School, taught the class about biomedicine, and Joseph Saul explained HIPAA regulations. Students leave the course feeling confident in their abilities and ready to advance in this exciting field. And those who pass the final exam receive a Certificate of Successful Completion that can be useful in their career development. Here’s what some graduates have to say:



First BTG graduating class

“Excellent course - very practical and useful content.”

“The trainer put so much time and effort into this course. She was knowledgeable, confident, polite and full of energy.”

“This is a wonderful chance to improve your skills and build on the experiences of other professionals.”

We’ll have our next session in January of 2008. The class costs \$495 for outside students – but for a limited time, interpreters already working at the UMHS will pay just \$250. Space is limited, so contact KC at 936-7021 or [kcato@med.umich.edu](mailto:kcato@med.umich.edu) to register today.

## Interpreter Services’ Culture Corner

The newsletter has a new look! From now on, each issue will feature images from our interpreters’ diverse cultures. This edition has a Mexican flavor, in honor of our two new staff interpreters (see back page). If you’d like us to feature your culture of origin in our next edition, send your favorite photos to [jamesmil@umich.edu](mailto:jamesmil@umich.edu).



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# Wendy's Contractor FAQ

## “How should I bill for mileage?”



**By Wendy Sielaff**  
**Payroll Coordinator**

Have you ever been confused about how contractors bill for mileage? If so, you're not alone. The old mileage policy was a bit complicated, and it had two other drawbacks. For appointments in Ann Arbor, it didn't pay for your first and last trip of each day. And for many appointments, it required you to calculate your miles

using the University Hospital as the starting and ending point. This meant that interpreters who lived in Livonia couldn't charge any mileage for a single appointment in Ann Arbor, even though they had to drive over 20 miles each way. Meanwhile, interpreters who lived in Ypsilanti could charge 20 miles for appointments in Ypsi Family Practice, even though they drove just two miles to get there.

As part of our revised contract interpreter policies, we've created a new mileage policy that fixes these problems. It's also WAY easier to understand. Here are the new rules:

- \* Mileage will be based on the total miles you drive, starting and ending at your home address.
- \* If you drive more than 15 miles on any given day, you can bill Interpreter Services for ALL miles driven over 15.
- \* If you drive 15 miles or less in one day, you won't be paid mileage that day.

To calculate your mileage, just add up your total miles driven each day, then subtract 15. Whatever's left is the mileage you'll be paid. If you live in Canton, for example, your mileage calculations for a typical day might go like this:

Home to Ypsi Pediatrics: 8 miles  
Ypsi to Taubman Center: 10 miles  
Taubman to Briarwood: 5 miles  
Briarwood to Home: 17 miles  
Total Miles Driven: 40 miles  
Total Mileage Billed: 25 miles  
(Total Miles Driven minus 15)



Just write your total mileage for each day in the mileage column on your timesheet. To help with record keeping, contract interpreters should inform me of the home addresses you'll be using as the starting and ending point of each workday. To determine the number of miles between clinics, you can use our old friend the Mileage Matrix or Mapquest. Mapquest can also be used to calculate the number of miles between your home and a clinic.

Remember, this new policy applies to contract interpreters only. Until further notice, staff interpreters will continue to bill for mileage the same way they always have. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (734) 647-7988 or at [wsielaff@umich.edu](mailto:wsielaff@umich.edu).

## “What is my minimum billable time?”

As you know, new contract interpreters are paid a minimum of one hour per appointment, no matter how long the appointment lasts. That is their Minimum Billable Time (MBT). But to encourage interpreters to develop their skills, graduates of the Medical Terminology Course and Bridging the Gap get their MBT raised by 0.5 hours after each course - to 1.5 or two hours per appointment.

This concept has caused some confusion. For example, imagine that you're called to the ER at 3:00 pm. It's extremely busy, and by the time you leave at 6:00 pm, you've interpreted for five different patients. You worked for three hours, but you interpreted for five separate appointments. If you're paid a minimum of two hours per appointment, should you bill for three hours... or for 10?

You may be disappointed to hear it, but Minimum Billable Time is subject to some restrictions. For example, if you have consecutive appointments, you can ONLY charge your MBT for each appointment if there is over one hour between the end of one appointment and the scheduled beginning of the next. If there is one hour or less between two appointments, you should bill for the total time you spend interpreting and waiting/traveling between appointments.

For example, let's say you have an appointment at 9:00 in Briarwood, and another at 11:00 in the Taubman Center. If your 9:00 appointment ends at 9:30, you can charge your MBT for each appointment because there is over one hour between the end of one and the scheduled beginning of the next. But if your 9:00 appointment ends at 10:30, there are only 30 minutes between appointments. In this case, you should bill for the total time you spend interpreting AND waiting/traveling between appointments. So if your 9:00 appointment ends at 10:30, and your 11:00 appointment lasts until 12:00, you would bill a combined three hours for both appointments since you worked from 9:00 - 12:00. You would not be able to charge your MBT for each appointment, because less than an hour passed between the end of one appointment and the beginning of the next.

NOTE: If you have consecutive short appointments that last less than your MBT for one appointment, you can charge your MBT once to cover them all.

A full copy of this policy will be given to all contractors in orientation. Please send any questions or comments to: [ISPolicyCommittee@umich.edu](mailto:ISPolicyCommittee@umich.edu).

# A New Vision at Interpreter Services

Interpreter Services has a bold new vision. With the input of our interpreters, we've set ourselves three ambitious goals:

Our services will consistently exceed both patients' and providers' expectations.  
Compassion and professionalism will be the hallmarks of every member of our team.  
**Our department will set the standard of excellence for interpreter services.**

Below you'll see some of the many ways our interpreters are taking the lead in putting this vision into practice.

## New Leadership

To help manage our growing staff, Interpreter Services has created new leadership positions. Rita Galin and Denise Hermans now serve as Lead Interpreters. They'll act as supervisors and advisors to our staff interpreters - except for Sign interpreters, who report directly to Michelle. Rita will work with Chinese and Spanish interpreters, and Denise will work with Arabic, Japanese, Korean and Russian. Daniel Gardner will manage our contract interpreters and schedulers. You may already be acquainted with Rita, Denise and Daniel, but here are a few things you probably didn't know. (Profiles written by Susan Flink and James Militzer.)



Rita is a Russian interpreter born in Tallin, Estonia. She attended medical school at Tartu University, serving an internship in neurology and neurosurgery. She got married

and later moved to Natania, Israel. In 1994, she emigrated to the U.S. with her husband and son, and settled in Ann Arbor. She now has two sons, Ben (11) and Tal (20), who studies at the U of M and also works at Interpreter Services. In 1997, Rita became the first staff interpreter to work at the hospital. A classical music fan, she ushers for the University Musical Society, a "job" that she greatly enjoys.



Daniel is not an interpreter, but he may be the most multilingual person in our department. Through his contact with interpreters, he's picked up bits and pieces of

Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, French and Sign. Born and raised in Michigan, Daniel went to college at ITT Tech in Troy, where he studied Computer Aided Drafting. He later got a job at Kellogg Eye Center, working his way up to office coordinator. He came to Interpreter Services in September of 2005. Daniel lives in Romulus with his partner Jerry, four dogs (Suki, Brutus, Obie and Penelope) and a cat named Bootsie.



Denise is a French interpreter, born and raised in Montreal, Canada. She came to the U.S. in 1990, where she pursued studies in Spanish and computers. Denise has had

many different jobs, from summer camp counselor and store clerk, to small engine mechanic and house painter. She ran a hotel in Montreal, and she was even a baker at Zingerman's Bakehouse. Denise has been a staff interpreter for five years. She lives in Plymouth, Michigan with her husband Fred. They have three daughters, Agnes (26), Marie-Julie (21) and Sarah (19).

## The Translation Division

"Can we get this translated?" It's a question interpreters hear all the time. Clinics throughout the UMHS have countless documents they'd like translated into other languages. When they see an interpreter from one of those languages, they often jump at the opportunity and ask us to translate. In the past, many interpreters would accept these requests. They'd drop off documents to be translated at the office, or just take them home to translate themselves. But with individual interpreters accepting and performing translations on all sides, things were getting out of hand. In many cases, clinics would call Interpreter Services asking when their translations would be ready, and nobody at the office even knew that a translation had been requested. That's why Interpreter Services has created the Translation Division.

Headed by Spanish staff interpreter Maria Militzer, the Translation Division provides a single entry point for all translation requests, from all languages. Now, if a provider asks you for a translation, just ask them to visit the Translation Division website at [www.med.umich.edu/interpreter/translate.htm](http://www.med.umich.edu/interpreter/translate.htm). Don't promise them anything, and don't give them a timeline - Maria will handle that.

If a provider asks you to translate a short written text, like a prescription, you can still do this on site if you feel comfortable translating. But remember, you should never provide written translations that are longer than a few lines, or take a document home to translate it. If you have any questions, or if you'd like to participate as a translator, just e-mail Maria!



# Welcome New Staff Members!



Angelica Paz Snyder first found out about Interpreter Services back in 2001 during a Spanish class, when a classmate mentioned that UMHS was looking for interpreters. She signed up as a contractor the next day. Now, after spending several years working in other departments and raising a family, Angelica has returned to Interpreter Services as a staff Spanish interpreter.



Gabriela C. Wilson was born in Caracha, Michoacan, Mexico on November 1, 1978. After graduating from high school in 1996, she went to Boston to study English, then returned to Mexico to go to college. She graduated in 2000 and went to work in the state government. She had a knack for politics, and became a leader of her political party, leading the successful campaigns of state senators and representatives in Michoacan.

Angelica is from the city of Guadalajara, in the state of Jalisco, Mexico. She studied at Rancho Santiago College in Santa Ana, CA, and the Kellogg Community College. She later transferred to Eastern Michigan University, where she finished her Bachelors in both Spanish and communications. Her favorite pastimes are doing crafts, restoring furniture, redecorating, sewing and dancing. "It's exciting to be part of Interpreter Services again," she says. "It is nice to be back after six years!"

In 2003, Gabriela went to the beach near her hometown and met a handsome American on a fishing trip. "He didn't catch any fish," she says, "but he did catch a wife!" The couple got married in 2004, and had their son Nicholas later that year. She started working as a Spanish contract interpreter in 2006, and in August 2007 became part of the staff. She's very happy to work as an interpreter. "I wanted to help people bridge the communication gap with healthcare providers," she says.

## Congratulations Susan!



On May 15, 2007 our friend and evening scheduler Susan Kalta married Jan Daoud, an electric and power engineer from Egypt. The ceremony took place in a Christian-Orthodox Coptic church in Giza, Egypt. After church the couple and their families enjoyed a reception party. Congratulations Susan and Jan! We wish you a lifetime of happiness together.

## Welcome to the world, Samuel and Daniel!

Many of you know that Russian interpreter Lyuba Race and Spanish interpreter Cynthia Wilson were expecting babies. Well, the wait is over and it's time to welcome Daniel Race and Samuel Wilson into the world. Congratulations to Lyuba and Cynthia and their families!



Samuel



Lyuba and Daniel