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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **National Coalition charts path for Healthcare Interpreter Certification**

CHICAGO – Members of a nationwide coalition of non-profit associations, language-service companies, hospitals, consumer groups and educators last week committed to developing a single national certification in medical interpreting.

Once developed and implemented, the certification will assure the minimum proficiency of healthcare interpreters and help improve the quality of care delivered to the millions of US health care consumers who have difficulty communicating in English, according to members of this National Coalition on Health Care Interpreter Certification.

“This ground-breaking work will ensure the quality of communications between patient and caregiver and therefore reduce the chances of increasing disparities,” said Fred Hobby, President and CEO of the American Hospital Association-affiliated Institute for Diversity in Health Management, a Coalition member. “Knowing that individuals who are entrusted to speak for and to non-English speaking patients are, in fact, competent and qualified, goes a long way to support our claim that all people are entitled to the same high quality of care.”

Representatives from the 18 stakeholder organizations as well as the meeting funder from The California Endowment formally launched the Coalition’s work on May 29-30 in Chicago.

Member organizations agreed to abide by a set of guiding principles, a chief one being the Coalition’s intent that several state-by-state and/or private initiatives to pursue their own set of certification will now “coalesce into one single national certification process.”

"We are very encouraged by the progress made by the National Coalition in working together toward developing one single national certification process which will provide clarity and improve the quality of health care interpreting throughout the nation," said Ignatius Bau, Program Director for The California Endowment.

Coalition members agreed that the development process should be fair and transparent, with the resulting certification intended to serve the public good rather than any particular stakeholder group. Organizations, individual experts, and interested individuals will be invited to take part in the process through its various expert workgroups.

“The ideas and effort put forth by this diverse group of stakeholders will, no doubt, fuel this groundbreaking effort in foreign language interpreter certification,” said Brandi Miller of Jewish Vocational Service of Kansas City, Missouri.

At the convening, coalition members organized themselves into several initial workgroups to pursue different aspects of the process, including the identification of interpreting competencies, analysis of existing interpreting tests and training, test development and administration, handling of rarer languages, project fundraising, and legal and logistical issues.

The National Coalition will continue to convene quarterly, with the next meetings to take place Sept. 20-21 in Minneapolis and January 22-23, 2009 in Los Angeles. Workgroups will pursue their respective projects in the intervals between the convenings.

Coalition members include:

- American Translators Association
- Association of Language Companies, Arlington, VA
- California Healthcare Interpreting Association
- California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, Oakland, CA
- Center for Immigrant Health, New York University School of Medicine, New York, NY
- CyraCom International, Tucson, AZ
- Institute for Diversity in Health Management of the American Hospital Association, Chicago, IL
- International Institute of Akron, Akron, OH
- International Medical Interpreters Association
- Interpreting Stakeholders Group, Minneapolis, MN
- Jewish Vocational Service, Kansas City, MO
- Language Line Services, Monterey, CA
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Boston, MA
- National Council on Interpreting in Health Care
- National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), St. Paul, MN
- National Health Law Program, Washington DC
- Portland Community College/Institute for Health Professionals, Portland, OR
- Spectrum Health, Translation and Interpreting Services, Grand Rapids, MI

Shepherding the work of the Coalition is its Coordinating Committee which includes the American Translators Association, the California Healthcare Interpreting Association, the International Medical Interpreters Association, and the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care, the latter being the recipient of The California Endowment grant to initiate the work. “We are thrilled to be able to bring such a diverse group together to work toward a common goal. This is truly collaboration at its best,” said Joy Connell, Board Co-Chair of the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care.

The Coalition’s work channels the growing momentum toward certification, as regulatory, industry, and consumer pressure keeps building to ensure adequate quality in the provision of language services to the millions of nationwide health care consumers with limited proficiency in English. Language barriers in the delivery of care have been repeatedly shown to result in poorer diagnoses, poorer treatment compliance, poorer health outcomes, more medical errors, higher risks to patient safety and increased liabilities for facilities and insurers.