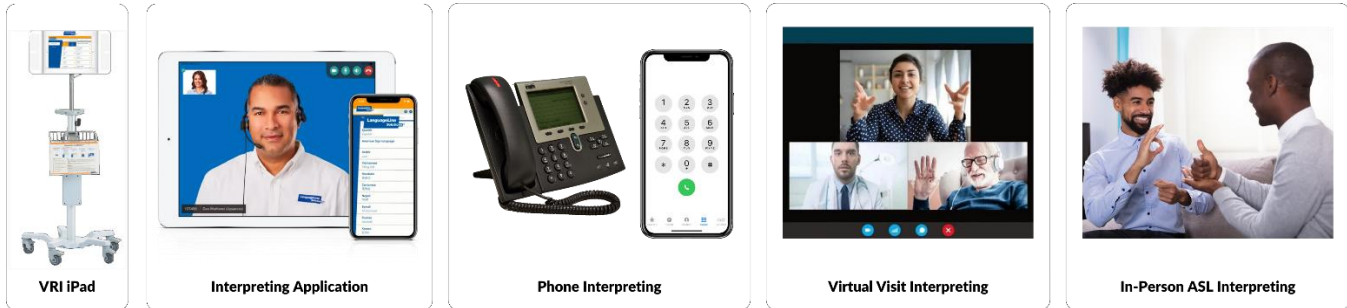


Interpreting Services: Essential to Safe Patient Care

January 2025



Background

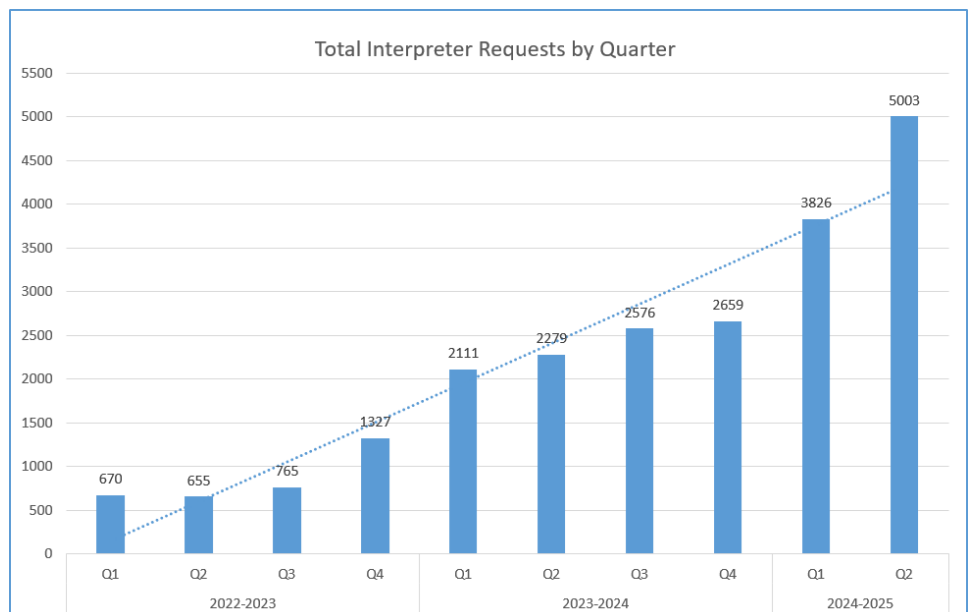
Virtual Care Services, in partnership with Provincial Language Services (PLS), gives providers and care team members access to professional medically trained interpreters to support communication with patients who are Deaf or hard of hearing, or whose primary language is not English. Our interpreting services support over 240 languages, including American Sign Language. Interpreting services can be accessed by all Island Health programs at no cost.

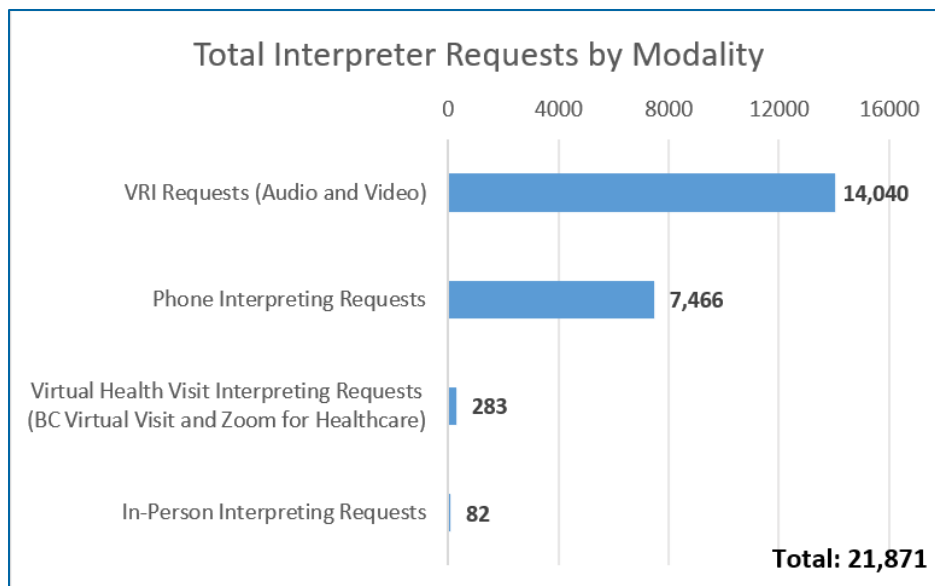
The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) recently published a report on an equity lens to hospital harm, "[Improving patient safety and quality of care: Applying an equity lens to hospital harm](#)". Patients who do not speak English or French have a 30% higher rate of harmful events compared with patients who speak English or French. The average cost of a hospitalization for patients experiencing an unintended harmful event is 4 times higher than the average cost of one without such an event (\$42,558 versus \$9,072).

Interpreting Utilization at Island Health (April 2022- September 2024)

Since Virtual Care Services began actively promoting and expanding interpreting services in 2022 at Island Health, there has been:

- **260%** increase in utilization of interpreting services
- **21,871** total interpreting requests





The following interpreting modalities are available at Island Health:

- **On-Demand Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) – Available 24/7**
 - Connect to an interpreter through video or audio via iPads on rolling stands across Island Health, including in Emergency Departments and acute settings. Health care providers in the community can also access the Interpreting application on Island Health iPhones.
 - *To see where VRI iPads are currently available, view the [Island Health VRI iPad Location List](#). To request VRI for your clinical area, please email virtualcare@islandhealth.ca.*
- **On-Demand Phone Interpreting – Available 24/7**
 - Use any phone to connect to an audio interpreter during a phone consult with a patient, or to support face-to-face conversations.
 - *View our guides on how to add an interpreter to a Phone Consult via [Landline](#) or [Mobile](#).*
 - **Phone interpreting can also be utilized if VRI iPads are unavailable.**
- **Scheduled Interpreting for Virtual Visits**
 - Book an interpreter to join scheduled BC Virtual Visit or Zoom for Healthcare appointments with patients. This can be done through the PLS Booking Portal.
 - *Access to the PLS Booking Portal can be requested by completing the [PLS Customer Account Request form](#).*
- **In-Person Interpreting for American Sign Language (ASL)**
 - Whenever possible, book an in-person ASL interpreter for appointments with patients who are Deaf, Deaf-blind, or hard of hearing. This can be done through the PLS Booking Portal.
 - *Access to the PLS Booking Portal can be requested by completing the [PLS Customer Account Request form](#).*
- **COMING SOON: On-Demand Interpreting for BC Virtual Visit Appointments**

[Learn More](#)

To learn more about Interpreting Services at Island Health, please visit the [Interpreting Services Intranet Page](#) or contact Virtual Care Services at virtualcare@islandhealth.ca.