

# **Are Dentists Required to Provide Interpreters for Dental Visits and Other Dental-Related Situations?**

The short answer is yes. This is covered under the Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you feel that you need an interpreter in order to understand what your doctor/health care provider is telling you, then the doctor/health care provider is required to provide you with one. It is best to contact your doctor/health care provider directly and tell them, prior to your appointment, that you need an interpreter. Do not hire your own interpreter and expect the doctor/health care provider to pay your interpreter for you. You may run into problems that way. The doctor/health care provider must pay for the cost of an interpreter, even if the cost of the interpreter is more than the cost of your visit. The doctor/health care provider is expected to handle the cost of interpreter as a normal business expense or as part of the overhead costs of operating a business. If your doctor/health care provider tries to encourage you to bring in a signing family member or a friend as a way to "save costs", say no. Family members and friends cannot be expected to be neutral and sign everything they hear. They may be emotionally or personally involved with you and this may affect their interpreting. Using them as interpreters can also cause problems in maintaining your confidentiality as a patient.

## **ADA Questions and Answers for Health Care Providers**

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities by places of public accommodation. 42 U.S.C. § 12181 - § 12189. Private health care providers are considered places of public accommodation. The Department of Justice has issued regulations for the obligations of public accommodations under Title III at 28 C.F.R. Part 36. The Department's Analysis to this regulation is at 56 Fed. Reg. 35544 et seq. (July 26, 1991).