



SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH  
**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH  
& RECOVERY SERVICES**

DATE: January 24, 2002

BHRS POLICY: 01-08

SUBJECT: Bilingual Salary Differential -Per San Mateo County Policy

AUTHORITY: CCR, Title 9, Chapter 11, Section 1810.410 (a) et seq; County (EPS) Policy and Procedure – Bilingual Salary Differential Allowance (Bilingual Pay). DHCS All Plan Letter 17-011, and Research and Analytic Studies Division (RASD).

AMENDED: Technical Revision January 9, 2020

PURPOSE

- To support the following Human Resource Development Standard articulated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA:

*Staff training and development in the areas of cultural competence and racial/ethnic mental health shall be implemented at all levels and across disciplines, for leadership and governing entities, as well as for management and support staff.*

An Implementation Guideline in support of this standard recommends that (the organization) ... develop and implement differential pay rates for specialized skills in cultural and linguistic competence in general, and for racial/ethnic (mental health clinicians) in particular.

- To support the expectation of State Department of Mental Health that beneficiaries whose primary language is a threshold language (i.e. primary language of 3,000 Medi-Cal beneficiaries or 5% of the beneficiary population, whichever is lower) have services available to them in their primary language. In San Mateo County, English, Spanish, Chinese and Tagalog are the threshold languages.

## POLICY

- All sites and specific treatment teams serving beneficiaries who meet threshold standards for Spanish, Tagalog, and Chinese languages shall have designated positions for Spanish, Tagalog, and Cantonese and Mandarin speaking employees.
- In order to maintain this capacity, applications to fill available Spanish, Tagalog, Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin) speaking clinical positions may be taken continuously, and interviews may occur as soon as candidates are screened and certified as meeting minimum qualifications by Employee and Public Services (EPS).
- Positions designated as “Spanish, Tagalog, or Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin)” in categories other than clinical will be filled in accordance with all usual civil service procedures for application, screening, and interviewing which may include recruiting on a continuous basis.
- In addition to designated Spanish, Tagalog, or Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin) speaking positions, clinicians who speak those languages and who occupy non language-flagged positions may also qualify for a language differential under certain circumstances, including demonstrated need for the language skill and linguistic competency.
- Applicants and incumbents applying for a differential must be screened in Spanish, Tagalog, or Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin) for competency in performing the work required of their position. A language certified staff member will be requested to test administrative support staff for language competency. Clinical staff must be tested specifically for their competency in providing therapy in Spanish, Tagalog, or Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin); another clinician must conduct this testing process.
  - Mental Health is responsible for providing the screening staff member or team; the screening interview is arranged with the assistance of EPS. The screener certifies the date of the interview and the results of the process on the attached form.
  - In order to expedite this process, managers shall make available to the Personnel Committee names of qualified screeners who have agreed to perform this function and who can be available on an as needed basis for a designated period of time.
  - Candidates may not be hired into designated positions prior to successful completion of the screening interview. In certain instances, a candidate may be appointed into a language designated position contingent on passing the language certification process.
  - Staff transferring from one language designated position to another must apply

for recertification for this new position. The staff member does not need to be retested.

- Extra-help employees do not qualify for the bilingual differential.
- Managers do not qualify for the bilingual differential.
- Supervisory positions are eligible for bilingual salary differentials only if the position requires the use of a second language 20% or more time in the usual workweek.
- Staff with limited or moderate language skills, for example, those who are able to read but not write in the required language or who can demonstrate only limited conversational skills, will not qualify for a language differential in a specific position.
- Staff fluent in a threshold language but not working in a position that requires this skill are urged to review other Mental Health staff vacancies where their linguistic competency is needed.
- Staff with skills in languages other than those identified as threshold languages do not generally qualify for a salary differential.
- For new employees filling positions designated for a language specialty, and who have passed language screening procedures:
  - The supervisor indicates on the hiring memo the intention to hire a staff member with a differential for language; the MH payroll and personnel specialist is responsible to enter all necessary data to assure this process is in place.
  - No other action on the part of supervisor or staff is necessary.
- When a supervisor seeks to provide a language differential for a staff member in a non-designated position, the supervisor must justify this by a written request to the Personnel Committee on a “Bilingual Salary Differential Allowance Form”. The request will describe the nature of the position, and the extent to which the particular job assignment requires that services be provided in Spanish, Tagalog, or Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin). The Personnel Committee will forward this request to the EPS Bilingual Pay Coordinator for determination of eligibility for the new position. If so designated, the language proficiency examination will be scheduled as previously described.
- For clinicians, Mental Health Services has established that it is not necessary to designate the percentage of time spent providing therapy in Spanish, Tagalog, or Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin) because the availability of therapists with

linguistic and cultural competencies is required by cited regulation. Further, the needs of a specific clinical caseload will vary over time. All clinicians who meet criteria for language differential will be designated at Tier Two.

- Administrative support staff occupying designated bilingual positions is classified at Tier One unless specific time/work study demonstrates greater than 50% use of Spanish, Tagalog, or Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin) in the work assignment.

Approved: Signature on File  
Gale Bataille, Director  
Mental Health Services Division

Attachment: Bilingual Salary Form