

Phoenixville Hospital

2025 HAP Achievement Award Community Champions Award—Small/Medium Division

Using In-Person Bilingual/Multilingual Patient Representatives for Language Barriers

The Goal

As the hospital's Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking population grew, language barriers limited access, understanding, and navigation of care—resulting in poorer outcomes and increased risk of errors. The shortage of qualified interpreters raised equity concerns, making effective communication critical.

The Intervention

Using The Joint Commission's *Roadmap for Hospitals* and the National CLAS Standards, the hospital implemented a language access plan to support its growing Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking population. A full-time bilingual representative was hired to provide interpretation and navigation support and later became a certified *Bridging the Gap* trainer, enabling 21 staff to complete interpreter training. As demand grew, more bilingual staff were added, with video interpretation via LSA used when in-person support is unavailable. Frontline staff were also trained to accurately document race, ethnicity, and language (REL) to ensure culturally responsive care.





The Hospital + Healthsystem
Association of Pennsylvania

2025 Achievement Award— Phoenixville Hospital

Page 2



Results

In-person bilingual and multilingual representatives have enhanced patient experience and advanced health equity by easing fear, building trust, and supporting patients through complex care. Testimonials consistently reflect their impact. One representative prevented a surgical error, earning a patient safety award. A 50 percent increase in Spanish-speaking patients and a 23 percent rise in Portuguese-speaking patients from 2022 to 2023 highlights the ongoing need for culturally and linguistically appropriate care.