



As I've talked about in [previous articles](#), one in 10 U.S. residents of childbearing age has limited English proficiency (LEP). That means millions of parents face language barriers when it comes to accessing healthcare for their children. Fortunately, we have hundreds of healthcare clients who have shown us how video remote interpreting (VRI) can improve children's healthcare, with better outcomes and satisfaction for LEP families.

I've dug into a few studies that show how language disparities can adversely affect children, and how VRI can be a new option to change the script on these situations. We also looked over how a Los Angeles children's healthcare system implemented VRI to increase usage and adoption by providers.

Families with limited English proficiency are less likely to question their child's hospital care and 2.1x more likely to experience adverse events

A [study](#) published in June of this year led by researchers at Boston Children's Hospital revealed that caregivers who lack English proficiency felt less safe asking questions and speaking up during their child's stay. The team surveyed 533 families and patients of 21 children's hospitals throughout the US and was led by [Alisa Khan, MD, MPH](#).

According to [coverage](#), the study found that after adjusting for income level and other mitigating factors, parents with limited English proficiency were:

- were one-fourth as likely as English-proficient participants to say they would freely speak up about something that may adversely affect the child's care
- were one-fifth as likely to say they would question providers' decisions or actions
- were less than half as likely to say they would be unafraid to ask questions when something does not seem right.

Medical interpreters are essential to successful LEP interactions and care, but can be skipped because of cost and limited availability when a family seems to have passable language skills. Video remote interpreting improves children's healthcare in medical settings by offering a cost-saving and easy-to-access alternative that can incentivize bringing in language support when a parent has limited English proficiency, even if limited communication can take place between a provider and patient family.

Children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder are less likely to receive services they need if their parent's first language is not English

There have been repeated critical shortages of ASL school interpreters for districts across the US, including in [East Texas](#), in [Iowa](#), and other states as far back as [1997](#). This lack of language support has implications beyond students' education. Many students across the country receive critical services for their disabilities through their school, including those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The [Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders](#) published a study in 2018 showing that students with parents whose first language is not English were less likely to access the same amount of services as their counterparts diagnosed with ASD. These included communication and behavioral interventions that are essential to the mental wellbeing of children receiving occupational therapy through their school.

Video remote interpreting offers schools an affordable way to bring interpreters, especially ASL interpreters, into these crucial parent-school district conversations to ensure their student is receiving the disability care they are guaranteed by law.

Los Angeles Children's Hospital: A Study in VRI

From 2012 to 2017, researchers conducted a study to evaluate the implementation of VRI at Children's Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA). The healthcare system, which serves patients throughout Southern California, already offered in-person and over-the-phone (OPI) interpretation services.

Researchers rolled out 165 VRI carts and iPads in clinics, inpatient wards, and the emergency department. Staff in each department received support through six weeks of training and problem-solving issues. Additional rollouts occurred in groups every two to four months.

Despite some initial challenges, the program was an overwhelming success. Over 50,600 VRI appointments occurred for a total of 556,938 interpretation minutes. Meanwhile, the use of OPI decreased by 37.5%, and the mean wait time for an interpreter fell from 60 minutes to 5 minutes. Rapid VRI adoption also occurred in clinics that lacked in-person interpreters.

Initially, CHLA Pulmonary and Orthopedic Clinics used VRI the most per minute. As VRI supplemented in-person interpreting, the annual census for the Pulmonary Clinic increased by 1,000 patients. The use of language services rose from 4 in-person meetings per month to 129 per month, 96.9% of which were VRI.

Additionally, VRI usage increased:

- 755.9% in the emergency department
- 583.6% in the endocrinology clinic.

It also increased substantially in outpatient settings through the use of iPads.

During interviews, clinical teams reported that VRI offered a more engaging, interactive, and readily available alternative to in-person and OPI for far more languages than staff interpreters. It also reduced wait times, appointment times, and improved patient satisfaction. However, staff still preferred in-person interpreters for more complex appointments.

Yet VRI also offers benefits for in-person interpreters. Researchers found that VRI freed up time for in-person interpreters to attend professional conferences and undergo additional training.

Overall, VRI proved to be beneficial for patients, clinical staff, and in-person interpreters.

[Video remote interpreting](#) at Boostlingo

While VRI doesn't replace the need for in-person and over-the-phone interpreting, it does serve as a great alternative in many medical scenarios. But to fully enjoy the benefits, you need a platform that makes it easy to connect. [BoostOnDemand](#) is our offering to get you connected to qualified medical interpreters instantly.

With BoostCare, you can connect with patients quickly and effectively—as well as suppliers and other support services. Plus, you'll gain access to our Boostlingo Professional Interpreter Network (BPIN) of interpreters who speak over 200 languages.

Think Boostlingo is right for you? Contact us today to start your free trial!

Author



Merrie Wallace, BSN MN | Chief Revenue Officer

[View all posts](#)

