

# Area Agency on Aging *Connections*

## Language translation firm assists non-English speaking area seniors

By Daniel Casciato  
For Pittsburgh Senior News

Studies have found that seniors who speak limited or no English often lack awareness of health and social services and how to access them, and have difficulty making appointments. They also receive less information about programs that can help them maintain their independence and have safe, healthy lifestyles with the type of care they need.

According to the 2002 Census Bureau, the United States has experienced a dramatic increase over the last 20 years in the number of people whose primary language is other than English. This is a result of the rapid increase in the number of immigrants from Mexico and various countries from Latin America and Asia.

A study published in the *Annual Review of Nursing Research* in 2004 cited that the foreign-born population nearly doubled to 31 million, or 11 percent of the 281 million that constitute our country's population. When both citizens and non-citizens are combined, the study estimated that nearly 25 million adults experience language barriers when they receive health care or social services.

While those statistics may sound alarming, organizations like the Allegheny County Department of Human Services Area Agency on Aging (ACAAA) are committed to removing language barriers so that all seniors are treated equal.

"Language should never be a barrier in accessing services that can help seniors," said Kara Newmeyer, care management supervisor for ACAA.

Most seniors are aware that by calling SeniorLine, they can reach professional care managers who can assist with informa-



tion and referral on ACAA services and community programs. In addition, the care managers may also provide assistance with applications to entitlement programs. They may not be aware, however, that ACAA currently has a contract with Echo International Resources, a downtown-based, full-service translation and localization service provider that offers comprehensive multi-language interpretation services between seniors and ACAA.

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"We want seniors and their caregivers to know that no matter what language they speak, we can help them," said Kara.

Echo employs a full-time staff of translators, project managers, linguists, terminologists, proof-

readers, editors and desktop publishing specialists. They are supported by a worldwide team of professional translators offering leading edge translation, including desktop publishing software in all languages and platforms.

"If anyone ever calls our SeniorLine for someone who speaks another language, we can arrange for an interpreter to go out for a visit with a care manager," explained Kara.

"It's important for people to understand that Pittsburgh is an international city," said Devon Cole, manager of marketing communications for Echo. "There are many immigrants who came to Pittsburgh. And as a community, people should not lose sight that there is a large, aging international population that needs to be supported."

Devon said that services provided by Echo are available to any person who requests assistance. "We do contract work with many corporations and agencies," she said. "But we have been contracted by individuals as well who need interpreting or translation services." Translation services include documents of any type and web sites, she added.

While Echo is an important partner with ACAA, some care managers and ACAA staff members are bilingual. "If we're ever in a pinch," Kara noted, "we know we can turn to them, as well."

Many of ACAA's brochures for seniors are available in different languages. Publications by the Social Security Administration and other government and private organizations are also printed in several languages.

ACAAA staff and care managers are also able to assist seniors who are hearing impaired. For those who have a TDD/TTY machine, they can contact ACAA at (412) 350-2727. A TDD/TTY machine is a terminal device used widely by deaf people for text communication over telephone lines.

"We don't see any language as a barrier," said Kara. "We're trying to become more culturally competent, as well."



For assistance with ACAA services or programs, call SeniorLine at (412) 350-5460. If you are hearing impaired, contact ACAA at (412) 350-2727 to obtain use of a TDD/TTY machine. For more information about Echo International Resources, visit [www.echointernational.com](http://www.echointernational.com). PSN