

Steward Health Care

A Continuum of Care for LEP Patients



Steward Health Care

Steward Health Care is a nationally recognized, fully integrated healthcare system. A market leader in the New England area, Steward offers a comprehensive spectrum of services in over 150 communities, including:

- 9 acute care hospital campuses.
- 1 Long-Term Acute Care Hospital (LTACH) with 2 campuses.
- 6 ambulatory surgery centers.
- 1 home care and hospice company.
- 24 affiliated or owned urgent care centers.
- 3 affiliated community health centers.
- 42 affiliated preferred Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF).
- 2,600+ physicians, including:
 - over 625 primary care physicians.
 - over 200 primary care mid-levels (Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants).
 - over 2,000 specialists providing care to over 1.2 million people.
 - Over 2,100 Steward Medical Group (SMG) employees with 800 employed physicians in 134 practice location.

Steward is the third-largest employer in Massachusetts with over 17,000 employees. Their model includes innovative, scalable, replicable operations designed to thrive in an evolving healthcare environment. Steward serves over 3 million patients annually in communities across eastern Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and southern New Hampshire. In 2016, they expect to handle:

- 85,000 hospital discharges.
- 202,000 adjusted hospital discharges.
- 397,000 ER visits.

Steward makes quality a top priority, monitoring over 100 quality metrics to improve patient care. Their efforts have consistently yielded outstanding results. Steward is:

- Nationally recognized as an Accountable Care Organization (ACO).
- Ranked as either 1st or 2nd in the country by Centers for Medicare Services (CMS) over the past two years.
- Invited to participate in Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation's (CMMI) Next Generation ACO, with a track record of success in commercial and governmental value-based contracts.
- Rated A or higher on Leapfrog's Hospital Safety Score (Steward: 80% vs. Nationally: 31%).

Steward

From check-in to the patient's room, through discharge, home visits, and physician follow-ups, CyraCom helps Steward simplify healthcare for non-English-speaking patients. By integrating language services into the continuum of care, Steward lives up to its reputation as a community hospital.

Steward's Commitment to Serving a Diverse Community

One-in-five Massachusetts residents speaks a language other than English at home. Steward campuses cover much of eastern Massachusetts, including the greater Boston area, so their diverse patient populations speak many languages. These include Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, French, Russian, Vietnamese, Cape Verdean, and Haitian Creole.

"Speaking our patients' languages and understanding their cultural needs enables us to provide the best care possible," said System Director of Diversity Initiatives and Interpreter Services Carla Fogaren. "We're honored to provide this level of care to our culturally and linguistically diverse patient populations." Fogaren oversees Steward's language services program system-wide.

An Overview of Steward's In-House Language Service Efforts

In-House Interpreters - Making Rounds

Fogaren became involved with interpreter services at Steward in

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1995. "When you're the only Portuguese speaking nurse - or person - in the hospital... people start calling on you to be the interpreter ad hoc," she laughed. "It became clear to me that I needed to seek training and develop an interpretation program. I was lucky to be in a place that understood and supported this endeavor."

In the decades since, Steward has built an 80-plus-member-strong language services team - in-house interpreters spread throughout Steward's hospitals. Each campus hires its own interpreter staff based on the needs of their patient population. Steward Interpreter Managers report to Fogaren and receive assistance from her Technical Coordinator, Christopher Ricciotti.

In 2015, Steward Health Care handled 257,000 interpreter encounters system-wide with an average response time of 7.8 minutes.

In addition to interpreting for scheduled appointments and as-

needed, interpreters round on patients twice a day. They confirm that each LEP patient understands their right to an interpreter at no cost and that interpreters work with the clinical staff to meet patient needs.

Staff Training and Testing - Regular Refreshers and Integrating With Existing Training

"We provide a lot of continuing education," Fogaren explained. "In one year, we educated over 12,000 staff, in-person. With sufficient training, we can hold staff accountable for properly utilizing our interpreter staff, as well as CyraCom's dual handset blue phones that provide bedside interpreter access 24/7. We have hundreds of languages available through CyraCom."

Education and accountability help Steward personnel understand the importance of utilizing interpreters with every LEP patient.

"The challenge for us is helping providers, who are well-intentioned but busy, to understand the importance of providing interpreter services for every LEP patient encounter," Fogaren said. "There's the adult daughter with her non-English-speaking elderly mom. She speaks the patient's language; she's right there answering all the questions, and that becomes the path of least resistance. Do they use the daughter, request an interpreter, or wheel in the interpreter phone cart? It's so easy to skirt policy – such as retrieving resources – because 'This is going to take more time.' But the situation can quickly escalate into a medical issue, potentially resulting in a negative outcome and legal issues. So the education is on-going."

Every new Steward employee receives an orientation on how to request and collaborate with an interpreter. Steward also incorporates "How to work effectively with an interpreter" training into their regular nursing trainings. Nurses must recognize when scenarios require interpreters and demonstrate live how to connect to CyraCom.

Choosing and Implementing a New Language Services Partner

Fogaren understands first-hand the importance of quality, reliable language services.

"People in my position take our role in meeting the needs of LEP patients – who often have a less-than-optimal experience in the health care system – very seriously," she explained. "So we put the needs of our patient population first and foremost when choosing a language services provider."

Steward wanted a long-term relationship with their new partner. Fogaren researched several phone interpretation companies and chose CyraCom after receiving numerous recommendations and

endorsements from hospitals across the country. She felt that the quality of CyraCom's service would better serve the needs of Steward's patients.

"It's not just about choosing a vendor," Fogaren noted. "Anyone who connects directly with our patients represents Steward Health Care, so they need to understand the quality of care that we provide."

"CyraCom engages us in growing and provides us with learning opportunities as well," she continued. "It's those added values that make people more loyal to a partner like CyraCom versus someone else. That means a lot to people in the interpreter field."

CyraCom's Implementation Team – a Seamless Transition

Fogaren had valid concerns about implementing a new phone interpretation vendor system-wide. She wanted to be sure that CyraCom would follow the Steward script on policies, such as when and how to use a phone interpreter versus an in-person interpreter. She also needed staff trained to document phone interpreter usage in the patient's medical record.

CyraCom's implementation team quickly addressed these concerns, educating Steward staff to use phone interpretation according to hospital policy. They also reminded clinical staff to disinfect the phones in between patient uses. Fogaren was impressed.

"Bob Davis, CyraCom's Director of Implementation Specialists-Project Management, is an absolute gentleman. He is a pleasure to work with and an expert at what he does," she reported. "All the feedback I received was wonderful. He and his team did everything we asked them to do. People still talk about it – how good they were, how nice they were, how patient they were and the fact that they came in for every shift to do the education. It was incredibly easy and painless through every step in this process converting all of our hospitals. It went seamlessly. It's a great process, and I want to make sure they get the credit they deserve."

CyraCom's team implemented each hospital in a matter of days, installing phones, setting up speed dials and extensions, and educating hospital personnel in how and when to use the new service.

"Without CyraCom's staff teaching people on the front end and making them feel comfortable, implementation would have taken longer and we may have had a different outcome," Fogaren explained. "If the initial training is not done properly, it creates a negative impression to the user on their first try. Then they're less likely to feel comfortable using the system."

With implementation and education complete, Steward staff now benefit from the consistency and convenience of CyraCom's service.

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easier,” said Fogaren. “We programmed our phones to reach CyraCom with the touch of a button. When you make something easy and when people don’t have to ask permission or remember 15 passwords, they’re more apt to use it. We really appreciate the quality of the service and the support throughout the relationship.”

Building a Continuum of Care with the help of CyraCom

– Hospitals, Home Care, and Physicians

Providing Ongoing Interpreter Access in the Hospital

During Steward hospital admissions, LEP patients receive cards printed in the area’s common languages. A patient can identify their preferred language by pointing to the text printed in that language. Steward equipped each hospital entrance with a CyraCom dual-handset blue phone for quick interpreter access.

When an LEP patient is admitted, clinical staff places a blue phone in their room to ensure they have access to an interpreter 24/7. The phone stays with the patient until discharge, so staff or care givers visiting the room can reach an interpreter with the push of a button.

Bringing In-Language Care Into the Home

Steward’s home care professionals follow up with patients after discharge, making sure they understand and follow aftercare instructions. Fogaren explained that CyraCom plays a critical role:

“Our nurses show up at the house - sometimes they know the patient speaks another language, but sometimes they don’t – and it’s a life-saving resource. They get on their smartphone and call an interpreter using the CyraCom mobile app, then use speakerphone to interact with the patient. Before that, their options were limited, often relying on anyone in the house who could speak a little bit of English. Now they always call the professional medical interpreter. The family can still be involved but not in an interpreter role.”

Beyond the Hospitals - Continuing the Conversation in the Physician’s Office

Steward’s commitment to providing quality care to all patients doesn’t end at the hospital door. Steward’s physician offices use

CyraCom phone interpretation for follow-up appointments, and Fogaren sees this as an essential component of patient safety and recovery.

“Our 2,600 doctor affiliates have access to CyraCom, connecting interpreters to patients in the exam room,” she said. “Otherwise, we could do a fantastic job in the hospital, but what happens once they leave our door? What’s the continuum of care for these patients then? This is an important component of reducing readmissions as well.”

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A True Partnership – Steward/ CyraCom Collaborations

Supporting On-Site Interpreters

Steward’s physicians prefer in-person interpreters for their most sensitive patient conversations. In the past, a hospital interpreter driving to the doctor’s office left a gap at their home base. Today, they can travel knowing CyraCom interpreters will cover their absence.

Simplifying Surgical Consults and the Consent Process

Steward physicians now use CyraCom for pre-surgical conversations with LEP patients. Doing this in-office several weeks before the procedure may improve outcomes and increase patient satisfaction and retention. As Fogaren explained:

“The experience was ‘This is great! I would rather do an informed consent for surgery with this patient in my office, instead of five minutes before surgery in the hospital with a hospital interpreter.’ No one should be reading those consent forms five minutes before surgery - they tell you the worst things that could happen. If you know two weeks before and you have time to ask questions, you’ll be better informed and potentially be much calmer the day of the surgery.”

Supplementing Interpreter Testing

Fogaren’s team screens new interpreter candidates through internal assessments and interviews. CyraCom now provides supplemental testing to complete the rigorous hiring process.

About CyraCom

In business for 25 years, CyraCom is a language services leader that provides interpretation and translation services to thousands of organizations across the US and worldwide.

Providing the best language services is a complex formula, and CyraCom considers every piece of the equation: quality, availability, security, speed and accessibility, and client support. Visit www.cyracom.com to learn more.

Contact CyraCom

Contact CyraCom today to discuss how we can improve your language services program.

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