

Stylist – July 2019

Board of Barbering and Cosmetology Breaking Language Barriers

California's Board of Barbering and Cosmetology is meeting the challenge of regulating a diverse industry by providing its licensees and consumers access to the board in a language they understand.

The three most commonly requested languages besides English have historically been Spanish, Vietnamese and Korean, and the board now produces all of its written materials in those languages. Some documents are being translated into additional languages such as Hindi, Chinese and Farsi as well. Meanwhile, the board continues to use live telephone translators extensively to communicate with limited-English licensees and the public, and to reach out to immigrant communities with town halls in cities throughout California.

"It's hard for licensees to follow the state's rules and regulations, or for consumers to bring concerns or complaints to the board, when there's a language barrier," said Kristy Underwood, the board's executive officer. "The board is proud of its efforts to provide meaningful language access to consumers and the thousands of individuals who have chosen the barbering and beauty industry for their career."

Nowhere is California's remarkable diversity more evident than in its 50,000 beauty salons, nail salons and barber shops. A recent study by the UCLA Labor Center, for example, found that 82 percent of California's 129,000 manicurists are foreign-born, with 69 percent hailing from Vietnam. Over the last four years, at least 27,000 limited-English applicants have taken a board licensing examination.

The board's efforts to foster diversity include:

- Offering all board-produced informational bulletins, brochures and other written materials for both consumers and licensees in Vietnamese, Spanish and Korean. The board is now translating selected documents into other frequently requested languages as well.
- Establishing a separate link on its website for the Vietnamese, Latino and Korean communities.
- Offering live translators to all licensees and consumers who call the board with questions or concerns or visit board offices in Sacramento.
- Developing a "language access protocol" for inspectors who visit barbering and cosmetology establishments as part of the board's enforcement efforts. The primary goal of the board's enforcement activities is to educate licensees about how to operate safely. This protocol, which uses live telephone translators, allows shop owners and workers to ask questions about board health and safety

policies. In addition, the report inspectors create for each shop they visit has been translated into Vietnamese, so licensees have the option to read violations in that language.

- Issuing all citations and supporting information to manicurists in both English and Vietnamese. The board also adds a notice to all correspondence from the enforcement unit that advises individuals to call the board if an interpreter is needed.
- Sending examination admission letters in the applicant's preferred language (English, Korean, Spanish, or Vietnamese).
- Providing examination orientation materials and written examination instructions for the practical examination in Korean, Spanish, or Vietnamese. The board also allows applicants who speak other languages to bring their own translator to the examination.
- Providing interpreter services in Spanish and Vietnamese, free of charge, if requested by the appellant, at all Disciplinary Review Committee hearings. Like examination applicants, appellants who speak other languages may bring their own interpreter to the hearing.

The board has developed a video, *BBC Celebrates Diversity*, which is posted on the board's Web site (www.barbercosmo.ca.gov). The video informs viewers of some of the ways the board has worked to provide language access to all its diverse consumer and licensee populations.