

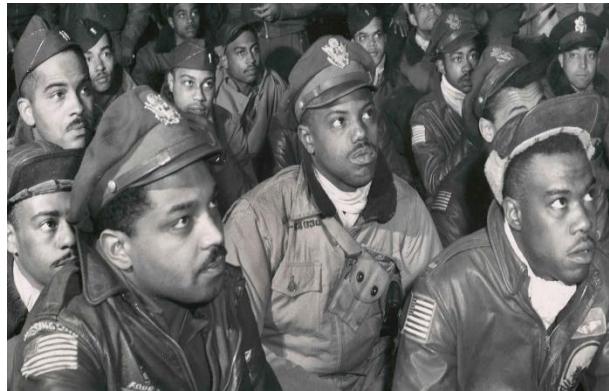
Medical Interpreting Services Department Newsletter

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Black History Month

Source: <https://www.history.com/articles/black-history-month>

Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history. Also known as African American History Month, the event grew out of "Negro History Week," the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating Black history.



Origins of Black History Month

The story of Black History Month begins in 1915, half a century after the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in the United States.

That September, Harvard-trained historian Carter G. Woodson and prominent minister Jesse E. Moorland founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), an organization dedicated to researching and promoting achievements by Black Americans and other peoples of African descent.

Known today as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), the group sponsored a national Negro History Week in 1926, choosing the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. The event inspired schools and communities nationwide to organize local celebrations, establish history clubs and host performances and lectures.

In the decades that followed, mayors of cities across the country began issuing yearly proclamations recognizing "Negro History Week." By the late 1960s, thanks in part to the Civil Rights Movement and a growing awareness of Black identity, "Negro History Week" had evolved into Black History Month on many college campuses.

President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month in 1976, calling upon the public to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

Today, Black History Month is a time to honor the contributions and legacy of African Americans across U.S. history and society—from activists and civil rights pioneers such as Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X and Rosa Parks to leaders in industry, politics, science, culture and more.

The Black History Month 2026 theme, "A Century of Black History Commemorations," focuses on a century of national commemorations of Black history.



February 2026 Calendar

*American Heart Month
International Friendship History Month*

- 1 – National Freedom Day (US)
- 1 – Thaipusam (Hinduism)
- 1-7 – World Interfaith Harmony Week
- 2 – Groundhog Day (US)
- 4 – World Cancer Day
- 4 – Rosa Parks's Birthday
- 6 – National Wear Red Day (US)
- 6-22 – Winter Olympics XXV
- 12 – Abraham Lincoln Birthday (US)
- 14 – Scout Sabbath (Judaism)
- 17 – Lunar/Chinese New Year
- 18 – Ramadan Begins (Islam)
- 18 – Beginning of Lent (Christianity)
- 26 – Black Lives Matter Day (International)

Why Professional Interpretation Services Matter for Legal & Medical Fields

Source: <https://www.mcislanguages.com/mcis-blog/why-professional-interpretation-services-matter-for-legal-medical-fields/>



This blog highlights the critical role of professional interpretation services in legal and medical settings, emphasizing how accurate communication protects lives, rights, and ensures successful outcomes.

Introduction: The High-Stakes Nature of Legal and Medical Communication

Picture this:

- A patient trying to explain recurring chest discomfort to their doctor, but the conversation stalls because they can't find the right words in English.
- A tenant in a housing tribunal, unsure if they fully understand their rights because the legal terms are being explained in a language they only partly speak.
- A caregiver picking up medication for an elderly parent, uncertain about dosage instructions due to language confusion.

In each of these situations, communication isn't just about words—it's about clarity, trust, and making informed decisions. While no one's life is immediately on the line, the risks are still significant: a delayed diagnosis, a missed legal right, or a treatment mistake.

That's why professional interpretation services are more than helpful—they are essential. In healthcare and legal systems, accurate communication ensures fairness, safety, and dignity for everyone.

What Are Professional Interpretation Services?

Professional interpretation services involve trained linguists who facilitate real-time, spoken communication between people who speak different languages—whether in person, by phone, or via video. Unlike ad hoc bilingual support, professional interpreters follow ethical guidelines, industry-specific terminology, and strict protocols to ensure clear, accurate, and culturally aware communication.

Interpretation isn't just about translating words it's about conveying meaning, emotion, and intent in high-pressure, high-stakes situations.

Why Accuracy Matters in Legal and Medical Interpretation

In both legal and healthcare settings, even minor language errors can have life-altering implications. Misinterpreted statements in a courtroom may affect the outcome of a trial. In medical environments, incorrect terminology or misunderstood symptoms could lead to an improper diagnosis or treatment.

Accurate medical interpretation ensures that patients understand their diagnoses, consent to treatments fully, and express symptoms clearly. Meanwhile, legal interpretation guarantees due process, ensuring every individual, regardless of language proficiency, can participate fully in their legal defence.

The Role of Interpreters in Legal Proceedings

Legal interpreters do more than just convert words—they serve as a bridge between the legal system and those navigating it. They interpret attorney-client discussions, courtroom testimony, immigration hearings, and depositions. Each of these scenarios involves complex language and legal jargon that requires specialized knowledge.

Key functions of legal interpretation include:

- Maintaining neutrality and impartiality
- Accurately relaying legal terms and procedures
- Upholding confidentiality and legal ethics
- Helping ensure non-English speakers receive fair representation
- Courts across North America often mandate the use of certified interpreters, recognizing their impact on the fairness and integrity of legal proceedings.

Ensuring Patient Safety Through Medical Interpretation

Miscommunication in healthcare can jeopardize patient safety. From medication instructions to surgical consent, every interaction matters. Interpreter services for healthcare ensure that doctors and patients understand one another clearly, regardless of language barriers.

Benefits of professional medical interpretation include:

- Improved diagnosis and treatment accuracy
- Enhanced patient satisfaction and trust
- Reduced risk of malpractice or noncompliance
- Better outcomes for vulnerable populations

Hospitals increasingly rely on certified medical interpreters who have a deep understanding of medical terminology, privacy regulations (like HIPAA), and cultural sensitivity.

Risks of Using Untrained Interpreters or Family Members

While it may seem convenient to rely on bilingual staff or family members, doing so often leads to incomplete, biased, or incorrect interpretations. Untrained individuals may:

- Struggle with medical or legal jargon
- Filter or edit statements based on personal judgment
- Breach confidentiality—intentionally or unintentionally
- Increase the risk of emotional involvement or stress

Studies have shown that using non-professional interpreters leads to more errors and misdiagnoses, particularly in high-stakes environments.

Confidentiality and Ethical Standards in Interpretation

Both legal and medical interpreters are bound by strict ethical codes. They must maintain:

- **Confidentiality:** Ensuring sensitive information is not disclosed
- **Impartiality:** Avoiding conflicts of interest or influence
- **Professional conduct:** Remaining neutral, respectful, and accurate at all times

This commitment to ethics makes professional interpretation services not just beneficial—but essential—for institutions looking to protect client and patient rights.

Legal Compliance and Regulatory Requirements

Many countries and states have legal obligations to provide interpretation services. In Canada, for example, language access laws and human rights legislation require that individuals in legal and healthcare systems have access to communication in their preferred language.

Failing to provide qualified interpreters can lead to:

- Legal challenges or overturned cases
- Financial penalties
- Damage to an institution's reputation

Working with certified professionals ensures organizations remain compliant with both ethical standards and legal frameworks.

Benefits of Certified and Specialized Interpreters

Certified interpreters go through rigorous training and testing to prove their competency in specific domains. Whether it's certified medical interpreters or legal specialists, these professionals offer:

- In-depth knowledge of specialized terminology
- Consistent accuracy and quality control
- Cultural competence for nuanced communication
- Assurance of confidentiality and ethical integrity

They don't just translate—they interpret with purpose, precision, and professionalism.

Case Studies: Real-World Impact of Interpretation Errors

- **Medical Example:** In a widely documented case from 1980, an 18-year-old named Willie Ramirez was brought to a Florida hospital in a comatose state. A bilingual staff member misinterpreted the Spanish word “*intoxicado*” as “intoxicated,” implying drug or alcohol use. However, in Cuban Spanish, “*intoxicado*” often refers to food poisoning or ingestion of a harmful substance. This critical misinterpretation delayed the diagnosis of a brain hemorrhage, ultimately leaving the patient quadriplegic.
- **Legal Example:** In U.S. immigration courts, numerous cases have highlighted the dangers of poor interpretation. In one such case, a Guatemalan asylum seeker's testimony was mistranslated by an uncertified interpreter, leading to a wrongful deportation order. The decision was only reversed after legal advocates intervened and identified substantial interpretation errors.

These cases demonstrate the devastating impact of inadequate interpretation and the urgent need for trained professionals.

Conclusion: Investing in Accuracy to Protect Lives and Rights

At the end of the day, every diagnosis, every legal decision, every consent form rests on one truth: **understanding matters**. Miscommunication can cost lives, justice, and freedom.

Professional interpreters safeguard rights, protect health, and ensure that no one is left behind because of a language barrier. Choosing certified interpreters is more than compliance, it's a commitment to equity, safety, and dignity.

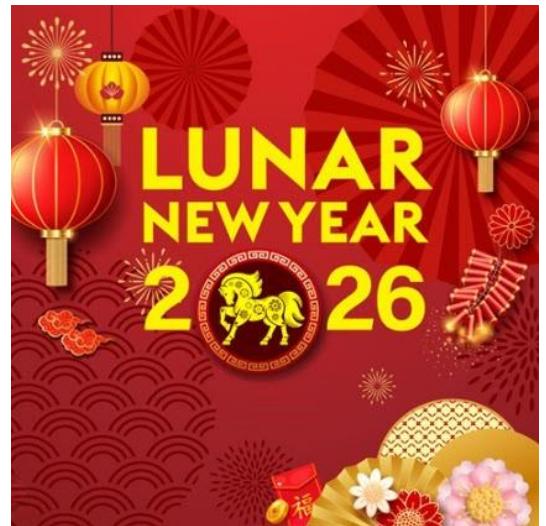
Lunar New Year 2026: Year of the Horse

Source: <https://earthsky.org/human-world/chinese-new-year-lunar-new-year/>

The Lunar New Year falls on February 17, 2026. It coincides with the date of new moon and signals the start of the Year of the Horse. One of 12 animal symbols of the Chinese zodiac (Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig) represents each year of the Chinese lunar calendar.

The horse was the most frequent transport means in ancient society, and it is considered as No. 1 of the most important 6 animals in China. They are strong, powerful and elegant animals. In Chinese culture, horses are always the representative of heroes and talents. People born in the Year of the Horse will share some similarities with the horse and thus they are brave, strong, talented, and independent. The Five Elements of Horse is Fire (Huo), symbolizing enthusiasm and energy, which entitles the Horse people energetic and enthusiastic character.

Historically, the Lunar New Year signals the arrival of *the world's largest annual human migration*. From the first day of the Lunar New Year (the day of the new moon) to the 15th day (next full moon), Lunar New Year celebrations abound. In the days that follow, celebrations include a variety of festivities. For example, there are dance parades featuring colorful dragons or lions. Or there are ceremonies to pay homage to deities and ancestors. Plus, children receive money in red envelopes and gifts are exchanged. Extended family members travel long distances to visit each other. What's more, each day holds a special significance that varies according to local traditions.



New Staff Profile: Hao Ngo



Hao is the newest Vietnamese interpreter to join the UC Davis Health Medical Interpreting Services team. Born in Vietnam, Hao relocated to the United States with his family at the age of twelve. From an early age, he frequently accompanied his parents to medical appointments, where he served as their interpreter—an experience that sparked his interest in supporting immigrant communities within the US health care system.

While pursuing his undergraduate studies at UC Davis, Hao participated in student-run clinics, providing interpretation services for patients and assisting with insurance navigation and cancer screening programs. After earning his degree in Neurobiology and Physiology, he joined the UC Davis Health medical interpreting team to further develop his skills and gain exposure to a variety of clinical settings. In his role, Hao is eager to continue helping patients overcome language and cultural barriers while expanding his professional experience.

Outside of work, Hao enjoys rock climbing, hiking, and cooking with friends. He was also a percussionist throughout high school and college, and now finds relaxation in playing the piano during his free time. Hao is grateful to be part of the MIS team and aspires to pursue a medical career where he can draw upon his interpreting background to provide culturally responsive care.

Welcome aboard, Hao! We are happy to have you as a part of the UC Davis Health family!