



Press Release

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HCHD Is First in TMC to Offer Bilingual Pay

Improved communications with Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese speakers

July 29, 2004 – Today, the Harris County Hospital District Board of Managers approved the hire of Berlitz Languages, Inc. to oversee the testing of employees for bilingual differential pay. The pay is offered to current and future employees to help HCHD improve communication with patients.

In so doing, the hospital district becomes the first institution in the Texas Medical Center to offer such an incentive to employees who speak Spanish, Vietnamese or Chinese, the languages most used by its patients.

Berlitz is a foreign language source for private and business instruction. The company has more than 400 centers in more than 60 countries and 125 years of experience. The annual cost of the contract is \$90,000.

About 1,000 current employees could qualify for one of two language ability levels – conversational or clinical. Pay will vary between the two levels.

In its first year of operation, the new recruiting and retention tool could cost the hospital district between \$450,000 and \$850,000, depending on the number of participants.

“Communication with our patients is important and well worth the investment,” said David S. Lopez, Interim President and CEO. “We need both administrative and clinical staff who can communicate effectively with our patients.”

In HCHD, about 90 percent of non-English speakers require communication in Spanish. While the majority of bilingual employees will need to speak Spanish, other staff is needed to speak Vietnamese and Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese dialects).

The Harris County Hospital District is the nation’s fourth largest public metropolitan healthcare system. It comprises three hospitals – Ben Taub General, Lyndon B. Johnson General and Quentin Mease Community – 12 community health centers, 13 satellite clinics at homeless shelters, a dental center, six school-based clinics and five mobile health units.

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