

East Boston Neighborhood Health Center (Boston, MA)

Like many other health care centers, the diversity that makes the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center distinctive is also one of its biggest hurdles. Its location in an isolated neighborhood populated primarily by Latino and Italian immigrants gives EBNHC a unique cultural flair but also swamps it with requests for interpreters, 80,000 last year. To fill this need, we helped EBNHC form a “grow your own” Medical Interpreter Initiative, retraining their own employees to become Auxiliary Medical Interpreters.

It takes four months of shadowing other interpreters and once-weekly classroom training for employees to become an Auxiliary Medical Interpreter. EBNHC assists employees by giving them release time for 50% of the hours required for the course. Upon completion of the program, employees receive a \$1,500 bonus and then work half-time in their original jobs and half-time as interpreters. The employees’ lives improve and the patients’ lives improve, benefiting the entire health care community. As EBNHC President and CEO Jack Cradock states, “this opportunity for EBNH’s entry level workers to obtain new skills and credentials signifies a quantum leap in the improvement of health care for all.”

This program’s success has not gone unnoticed. Many large acute care hospitals in Boston are desperate for interpreters, and they are actively trying to entice employees from EBNHC. While this may cause retention problems for EBNHC, it clearly shows its increasing reputation as a trailblazer in addressing labor shortage issues in health care.