

 <b>HAWAII HEALTH SYSTEMS CORPORATION</b> <i>Quality Healthcare for All</i>	<b>Department:</b> HUMAN RESOURCES	<b>Policy No.</b> <b>HR 0030A</b>
		<b>Supersedes Policy No.</b>
<b>POLICY</b>	<b>Approved By:</b> <i>Brenda S. Ho</i>	<b>Approved Date:</b> April 23, 2026
<b>Subject:</b> <b>ENGLISH-LANGUAGE POLICY</b>	HHSC Board of Directors By: Brenda S. Ho Its: Secretary/Treasurer	<b>Last Reviewed:</b> April 23, 2026

**I. PURPOSE:**

Communication failures are confirmed as a major cause of patient harm incidences. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that a commonly shared clinical language is used among staff when delivering healthcare for the purpose of ensuring quality patient care and healthcare delivery efficiency within the healthcare operations of the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation (HHSC).

**II. DEFINITIONS:**

“Employees” shall mean those individuals employed by HHSC including, but not limited to, civil service/exempt employees, managers, facility administrators, employed Medical Staff, and other healthcare professionals.

“HHSC” shall include all healthcare facilities or services which are currently operated or provided by the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation, including: Hilo Benioff Medical Center, Honoka’a Hospital, Ka’u Hospital, Kauai Veterans Memorial Hospital, Kohala Hospital, Kona Community Hospital, Leahi Hospital, Maluhia Hospital, Samuel Mahelona Memorial Hospital, and any other facilities or services which are currently operated or provided by HHSC, or which shall be operated or provided by HHSC in the future.

**III. POLICY:**

HHSC is committed to providing a work environment that promotes diversity and equal employment opportunity. HHSC also recognizes that a common clinical language is required when delivering healthcare services and conducting healthcare operations at HHSC in order to ensure quality patient care, reduce patient harm incidences, increase efficiency and respect patient autonomy by ensuring patients can understand what is occurring when they are being cared for. Accordingly, all HHSC employees shall be required to abide by the following provisions:

- A. All employees shall conduct their work-related communications in the English language when:
  - 1. Communicating with supervisors, co-workers, patients or residents and their family members, contractors, sales representatives and/or members of the public who only speak English;

2. An emergency or other situation arises in which employees must speak a common language to promote safety, such as during a Code or in an MRI setting;
  3. Engaged in cooperative work assignments with one or more parties and the English-only rule is necessary to promote efficiency;
  4. Engaged in patient or resident care delivery services;
  5. Engaged in any duties subject to monitoring by a supervisor for performance purposes, and such duties that require communications with co-workers, patients or residents and their family members, contractors, sales representatives and/or members of the public.
- B. The foregoing provisions shall not apply during employees' unpaid breaks, meal periods, and casual conversations unless the doing so has the potential to compromise patient care or the efficiency of HHSC's operations.
- C. Violations of this policy will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- D. Any acts of retaliation or other misconduct directed against employees who allege a violation of this policy or assist in the investigation of alleged violations of this policy is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**IV. AUTHORITY:**

- Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended
- 29 C.F.R. §1606
- Hawaii Revised Statute (HRS) Ch. 378 EEOC Enforcement Guidance on National Origin Discrimination, Number 915.005, 11/18/2016
- Hawaii Administrative Rule (HAR) §12-46-174

**V. RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURE(S):**

- CMP 0001A/B
- CMP 0100A

**VI. REFERENCE(S):** None