Washington Medical Enterpreters Ratify Contract

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - Medical interpreters in Washington - the people who help doctors and social workers communicate

Interpreters, required by federal law for Medicaid patients, have been hired through brokers in Washington instead of

"We're establishing a new foundation, and things to be run in decency and in order, and in fairness and in respect to th

The new arrangement also lowers the state's administrative costs from 44 percent to 28 percent, the medical interpre

Among their concerns, Hodges says, has been bureaucracy and what they describe as "poor treatment" from the brokers that assign them to jobs. She says many of the translators are first-generation Americans who were often hesitant to speak out.

"We never know how much our money is going to be until our check is in our hands. We never know if we're getting paid for the assignment now, or later, or never."

One of the first priorities for the new union members, Hodges adds, is to raise their professional standing in the medical community, something she says has been lacking.

"We are a crucial part of the care of the patient. Not that we're there to make decisions, but we are also a member of that team, and we don't always get the respect as a member of the team."

About 2,000 medical translators work statewide in more than 100 languages, and will be represented in contract negotiations by the *Washington Federation of State Employees*.