

2 September 2013

FSHS Language Strategy

Introduction and legislation

About 73 % of the clients using the FSHS services are Finnish speaking, some 11 % are Swedish speaking and around 16 % are English speaking. There are differences in client satisfaction and use of the services between language groups. The aim of this language strategy is to guarantee equal treatment for all students. The strategy does not provide guidelines on the use of languages other than Finnish, Swedish and English. Finnish will continue to be the administrative language of FSHS.

Under the Language Act (6.6.2003/423), the national languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish. FSHS produces nationwide healthcare services in Finnish and in at least acceptable Swedish and English. In bilingual areas, FSHS produces services in at least good Finnish and Swedish and in at least acceptable English. In individual situations, the staff can use other languages if they have the necessary skills.

Under Finnish law, everyone has the right to use Finnish or Swedish in dealings with municipal authorities in bilingual municipalities. In unilingual municipalities, the language of the municipality is used. However, everyone has the right to use and be heard in their own language in matters instituted by the authorities that directly concern their basic rights or the basic rights of anyone dependent on them or that concern an obligation imposed on them by an authority.

Under the Health Care Act, unilingual local authorities are required to make their healthcare services available in the language of the local authority. Bilingual local authorities must make their healthcare services available in Finnish and Swedish to give clients and patients access to the services in the language of their choice.

Aims and principles

Service situations

In bilingual areas, students have the right to receive service in Finnish or Swedish.

When using the Finnish Student Health Service in bilingual municipalities, students taking their first degree or a Master's degree receive all medical statements, medical certificates, prescriptions, treatment instructions and case histories in their first language, unless otherwise agreed.

FSHS's international clients generally do not understand Finland's national languages and thus do not receive information on the FSHS services if the information is not available in English. FSHS takes this into account in service situations by guaranteeing that service is available in English that is at least acceptable. Important treatment instructions and other material are also available in English.

The different FSHS units have different special characteristics when it comes to languages (both the national languages and English) and these are taken into account in all their activities.

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Information and communication

Online material is available in three languages with the same content.

In the case of information on events and current issues, it is important that translations are produced fast. To guarantee the quality of the translations, FSHS uses an authorized translation agency for all translations. The translations agency cannot always translate the information immediately. Therefore, time limits have been set for the translation of documents.

In everyday communication, there are sometimes situations where information is needed immediately in all three languages. In these situations, we cannot guarantee exact translations in Swedish and English, as having documents translated by the translation agency would cause an unreasonable delay in releasing the information. In these cases, summaries and approximate translations have to be used, so that Swedish and English speaking students know what is going on and, if necessary, can ask for more information.

Staff

FSHS staff is encouraged to take language minorities into account in service situations. However, it is unreasonable to require all staff to have excellent skills in three languages in addition to expertise in their own field. FSHS supports the language skills of its staff and encourages a positive attitude to service in different languages. FSHS encourages staff to use Swedish and English even when their language skills are only modest, and offers language training when necessary.

When patients are sent for further treatment and when new staff is recruited, the languages skills required in the job must be considered individually alongside professional skills, experience, abilities etc.

To make dealing with FSHS easier for Swedish and English speaking patients, FSHS will begin using language flags on the ID cards of staff working with patients. In service situations, patient guides and health guides are available to the clients in Swedish and English as well as Finnish.

Service promise

- *In bilingual areas, students receive service in good Finnish and Swedish. When using the Finnish Student Health Service in bilingual municipalities, students taking their first degree or a Master's degree receive all medical statements, medical certificates, prescriptions, treatment instructions and case histories in their first language, unless otherwise agreed.*
- *Students with first languages other than Finnish or Swedish receive service in at least acceptable English.*
- *Language options in service channels help staff to serve students with their contact language*
- *Online material, current information on services and client info are available in three languages.*
- *The Staff is encouraged to use English and Swedish in service situations, for example with the help of language training.*
- *The most important patient guides, health promotion material and health guides are available in three languages.*

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This language strategy was approved by the FSHS Board on 2 September 2013 and becomes effective on 1 January 2014. Updated 31.5.2018.