



KŌKUA MAU
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Final Report for the Hawaii Community Foundation

Palliative Care – Medical Interpreter Training for Hawaii

Summary

A successful two-day training was conducted for medical interpreters in Hawaii to expand their knowledge of and ability to work with palliative care. Conducted via zoom by Cindy Roat, that training allowed nine people who interpret for Compact of Free Association (COFA) languages to participate in the first training of its kind in Hawaii. Evaluations showed that participants found valuable: the overall course, the materials, the trainer and the new materials that they were able to use in the sessions. New materials were created for the course, specifically materials in COFA languages, which were used for the first time by participants and will be available for public use and in future training. Additionally, 12 other Hawaii-based medical interpreters were able to participate and complete the certification, further boosting our community's capacity in providing trained medical interpreters in serious illness situations and exposing COFA language interpreters to other experienced interpreters. Hopefully the training is the first step in future engagement with COFA communities, helping them with health literacy and understanding of serious illness, as well as opportunities to work with health professionals to increase and expand their understanding of COFA communities and cultural issues relevant to serious illness care.

Participant Feedback:

Jocelyn. completed the Zoom sessions in December and is a Chuukese interpreter with Language Services Hawaii. She was contacted to help a Queen's Health Systems patient, and she said she used the interpreting skills she learned from her training in the complex case. The provider was very impressed with Jocelyn and even sent a follow-up email to LSH to thank her for interpreting. Jocelyn shared that the training with Cindy helped her improve her skills to work with the providers, and with the Chuukese patients and families.

Background: Need for the training

Kōkua Mau identified the need to provide training to medical interpreters in Hawaii to help them be more proficient with palliative care terminology and facilitate serious illness conversations. The request comes from palliative care doctors and other providers who use interpreters but find that the interpreters are often unprepared for the terminology and the stressful situations that are usually a part of palliative care. Training should help interpreters to be a part of the care team and be able to support patients, family and providers in creating high quality care plans and conducting meaningful conversations.

In consultation with palliative care colleagues in California and Washington state, **Cindy Roat** was identified as a trainer with years of experience in training interpreters, including in palliative care and she agreed to work with us to conduct the training for Hawaii-based interpreters. We do not have an interpreter training in palliative care yet in



Hawaii, but hopefully this can be a first step in developing those local skills. Cindy is well-respected by professionals here in Hawaii. Her biography is at the end of the report. She conducted the training via Zoom on two subsequent Saturdays to allow for maximum participation.

Content on Palliative Care and Interpretation

The initial curriculum for the 8-hour workshop was designed in 2011 by a team of interpreters and palliative care specialists to prepare experienced medical interpreters to work in palliative care settings. It has since been used in a variety of states and settings. It covers:

- An Introduction to Palliative Care
- Interpreting Skills Applied to Palliative Care
- The Vocabulary of Palliative Care
- Sight Translation in Palliative Care
- The Impact of Emotion and Belief on Interpreting

In preparation for the Hawaii training, the workshop curriculum was reviewed and updated by palliative care experts to assure that the content is current. Additions were made for current palliative care options in Hawaii as well as changes to Advance Directives and POLST. Additionally, Jeannette Koijane, Executive Director of Kōkua Mau, and Hope Young, Advance Care Planning Coordinator, attended the sessions and provided up-to-date information and answered questions for participants.

Multimedia and Interactive Training Methodology

This is a multimedia, interactive training and includes videos, PowerPoint presentations, vocabulary exercises and practice of both consecutive interpreting and sight translation.

This class was offered in four-hour sessions on two consecutive Saturdays in December 2025. Participants needed to take the class on a desktop or laptop computer (not a smart phone) and be in a quiet location with reliable internet access where the participants would not be interrupted. Unfortunately, some of the students were unable to fulfill this requirement (for instance driving during part of the training) or did not attend all eight hours. They did not receive their CEU credits but were able to participate in as much of the training as possible. (No one was asked to leave, and all were encouraged to come back to the second session.) Everyone was invited to the in-person training course in January.

Materials updated and created in COFA languages

In preparation for the training a variety of materials were updated including the PowerPoint presentation, vocabulary exercises and practice exercises of both consecutive interpreting and sight translation. Additionally, bilingual medical glossaries and practice activities were created in Marshallese, Chuukese, Kosraean and Pohnpeian, the four most needed languages for COFA migrants. These are the first glossaries in these languages and were well received. They were also used at the in-person training course in January 2026.



Kōkua Mau worked with Cindy Roat and local translators to create these materials. These can be used by interpreters and translators as well as bi-lingual health workers creating an important public community resource that can be posted on the Kōkua Mau website and used by others. These materials could also facilitate next steps in community outreach and education.

Certificate of Participation

Students who attended all 7 hours of the training received a certificate of attendance. This class is accredited for 7 continuing education credits from CCHI and 0.7 credit hours from IMIA.

Widespread Recruitment and Publicity

Kōkua Mau used its extensive network to recruit people for the training. We reached out to Community Health Centers, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Health Systems such as Queens, Kaiser and Hawaii Pacific Health (HPH), and health plans such as HMSA, AlohaCare, Ohana and United Healthcare. Additionally, we contacted various associations that support health and health workers such as the Primary Care Association, Hawaii Public Health Institute, and Healthcare Association of Hawaii. Outreach was also done to organizations that work with COFA migrants including We Are Oceania, Family Promise of Hawaii, Kōkua Kalihi Valley and Kalihi Palama Health Centers. Additionally, Sue Zeng and Language Services Hawaii (LSH), helped to publicize the training through their networks including the Hawaii Interpreter and Translators Association (HITA).

Kōkua Mau created an on-line registration, and participants got reminder emails and additional information to prepare for the sessions.

The training was provided free of charge for participants who are interpreters for the COFA languages. Participants agreed to attend both sessions and provide feedback about the session and strategize about possible next steps. Follow up calls were held in January and February 2026.

Additional participants were added to the training.

Because there was extra room in the sessions, other medical interpreters were invited to participate. This enriched the sessions as they were all experienced medical interpreters and could add their expertise to the interactive sessions. Especially as participants were asked to share questions, concerns and personal stories, these other language interpreters added richness and variety to the discussion.

Details of COFA Participants

3 Chuukese, 2 Pohnpeian, 3 Marshallese, 1 Marshallese/ Kosraean

Note: Two Marshallese and three Chuukese decided to attend the 2 day in-person training in January instead.

Details of additional participants:



4 – Spanish, 1 Hawaiian, 1 – American Sign Language, 1 – Urdu, 2 – Ilocano/ Tagalog, 4 – Chinese,

Very Positive Evaluations

Post training evaluations were completed by 11 of the 22 participants. 100% of participants found the classes were useful and 100% found the materials very useful which included the PowerPoint on Palliative Care, Videos of interpreting, with discussion, English vocabulary exercises, conversion exercises, interpreting practice, and a translation exercise for POLST.

The full evaluation results are attached to this report. Here are additional insights, including comments in the participants' own language:

- 90% found the discussion of **managing emotion useful**, with 10% indicating it to be sort of useful. This last session of the training was a chance for participants to talk about the difficulties of interpreting, especially when they were not given a briefing ahead of time nor included in the de-brief of the case. This was an eye-opening session for us and will hopefully lead to change with healthcare providers.
- 70% found the bi-lingual materials extremely useful and 30% somewhat useful.

What did you like most about the class?

1. I learned a lot (3 people)
2. Appreciated the group discussion and learning from other interpreters (4)
3. Introduction to Palliative Care and Terminology
4. Access to the facilitator to discuss technical issues during the break
5. In-sight sample techniques

What did you like least?

1. Not enough time
2. None (3)
3. Problems downloading the documents (Note: *several people admitted they had not downloaded documents ahead of time!*)

Suggestions for improvements next time.

1. Both of you done a wonderful job. Thank you so much for sharing your knowledge and experience with all of us.
2. Cindy did an excellent job and made available to us all the materials needed for the course. My only feedback would be to call on those who never once spoke up in the class.
3. She goes through everyone detail of the handouts or videos and and make discussions about them or asked questions.
4. Cindy is the best.

How will this class help you in your interpreting work?

1. Help me by learn about different interpreting environments within my community.



2. The glossary lists will be very resourceful, having access to Kōkua Mau will also be helpful for me to reference when looking for resources as interpreter. Remembering the things I learned about how others approach their work as well has given me a better understanding on how to proceed and be a better interpreter. The videos were also a very good refresher.
3. Learning all the glossary, watch the video and learned tech
4. It is very helpful.

Observations and Lessons Learned

1. **Zoom is a good format for experienced trainers and additional classes could be offered using that format.** Participants called in from home and from workplaces where they had permission for the Saturday sessions. Three participants (at least) called in from Neighbor Islands.
2. **In-person training may be better for people without a quiet home environment or who were unable to make time for the Zoom training.** There was a high level of interest among COFA attendees, especially as it was the first of its kind and there were no fees. (A report on the in-person training in January is being finalized.)
3. **Bi-lingual materials were well received.** The glossaries and activities in Marshallese, Pohnpeian and Chuukese were used during the trainings and pairs were able to use them in breakout rooms. People were pleased that the materials had been created and felt that additional use of the materials would be needed and possible updates once they have been used in real-world situations. These newly created materials, as well as Kosraean materials, were used during the January in-person trainings.
4. **Providers need training on working with interpreters.** The training showed that most healthcare providers and facilities do not have appropriate training on how to work with medical interpreters. Interpreters need to be included in the care team and seen as an asset. For instance, few interpreters are regularly briefed about the case ahead of time or included in the de-brief after but rather thrown into difficult situations without the benefit of the team. This is very stressful for interpreters and does not provide optimum communication. Cindy Roat provides training for providers in working with interpreters and this resource could be shared in the community.

Next Steps

1. **Include participants in the Kōkua Mau network.** These sessions have given us contacts around the state in different communities. We will build on those connections to include them Kōkua Mau activities such as joining the newsletter to learn about activities and other trainings and inviting them to specific trainings or sessions. For instance, the interpreters were invited to a palliative care case discussion via Zoom in February 2026 as it involved a Chuukese patient and 4 interpreters attended!!



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2. **Invite participants to attend the January in-person training.** One participant was also able to attend the in-person training in January 2026, and several others were interested but had scheduling conflicts. Additionally, five people who were unable to attend the Zoom classes attended in January, so it was good to have an additional option, especially as the in-person, face-to-face training was well received by participants.
3. **Reach out to participants to identify people who are interested in next steps.** Several people expressed interest in further engagement on palliative care, and we suggested inviting the Kōkua Mau Speakers Bureau to speak at their church or community group. Those trainings focus on Advance Care Planning and understanding care options, such as Palliative Care and Hospice Care.
4. **Put all the materials up on the website plus other language materials.** Kōkua Mau will be updating our website to include the new materials created so they can be available to all.
5. Provide **training to healthcare providers.** Healthcare professionals are generally not well trained on working with interpreters (instead of “using” interpreters) and this can be a first step in creating connections between providers and the COFA language interpreters and cultural go-betweens. Cindy Roat provides this training and hopefully different parts of healthcare could work with her to improve their policies and practices.

We are very grateful to the Hawaii Community Foundation’s support of this project through their Health Equity Fund. We look forward to working together in the months and years to come.

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INSTRUCTOR



Cynthia E Roat MPH is a consultant, trainer and researcher in language access in health care. Cindy entered the interpreting world in 1992 after earning her master’s degree in international public health from the University of Washington and quickly became certified by Washington State as a medical and social-service Spanish-English interpreter. Her interest in systems change, however, led her into teaching interpreters, trainers and medical providers the basics of interpreting practice and consulting with healthcare administrators around the country on how to improve their language access programs. She also spent three years at Seattle Children’s Hospital, managing their unique Bilingual Patient Navigator program.



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Cindy is the author of a wide array of key resources in the field, including the original version of *Bridging the Gap*, for many years the country's most widely offered training for healthcare interpreters. She has developed numerous basic interpreter trainings and continuing education modules. Her most recent book, *Healthcare Interpreting in Small Bites*, is being adopted as an ancillary text in many interpreter training programs. She is a founding member of the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC), where she was a long-time Board member and Chair of various committees, a founding member of the Washington State Coalition on Language Access (WASCLA), and a former board member of the Northwest Translators and Interpreters Society (NOTIS) where she currently leads the Community Interpreter Division. She is known nationally as an engaging speaker, a knowledgeable resource, and an energetic advocate for language access in general.