

Understanding Oregon’s Dual-language Prescription Drug Labeling Law

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In 2019, the Oregon Legislature passed SB 698 to require pharmacies to provide dual-language prescription labels in both English and one of Oregon’s 14 high-need languages for patients with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The new law took effect Jan. 1, 2021 (ORS 689.564) and applies to all pharmacies except institutional drug outlets, where medications are not generally self-administered.

The goal was to provide medication instructions on the bottle in both English and a language the patient can understand so that it’s not confused with other medications or lost. The dual translation allows patients with LEP, pharmacists, providers, and caregivers to all understand medication directions. This will help reduce medication errors and ensure patient and caregiver understanding of critical prescription information.

The Oregon Board of Pharmacy (OBOP), in consultation with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), is tasked with identifying the 14 languages. They are also required to reevaluate the list at least once every 10 years. Currently, the law covers the following languages:

- Spanish (Español)
- Russian (русский)
- Somali (Soomaali)
- Arabic (عربي)
- Chinese (simplified) (简体中文)
- Vietnamese (Tiếng Việt)
- Farsi (الفباى فارسى)
- Korean (한국어)
- Romanian (Română)
- Swahili (Kiswahili)
- Burmese (ဗမာစကား)
- Nepali (नेपाली)
- Amharic (አማርኛ)
- Pashtu (پښتو)

Posting requirement: The law also requires pharmacies to post signage notifying clients of the right to free, competent oral interpretation and translation services for patients who are of limited English proficiency as well as the right to dual-language prescription labels. Pharmacies are responsible for creating and displaying this required signage.

Liability protection for pharmacists: Pharmacies are granted a measure of liability protection under the law. Pharmacies can’t be held liable for harms or injuries resulting from a third party (i.e. a translation vendor) if the pharmacy has both a contract with the third party and was not negligent with regard to the alleged misconduct of the third party.

Fitting lengthy directions on the bottle: There are multiple options available when a dual-language label seemingly will not fit on the bottle. This includes using pull out tabs, a larger bottle or folding a second label in half, called “flagging,” as seen below:



Cost of translation services: There are several translation service vendors that provide translation service in the 14 required languages. Without offering an endorsement of any vendor, approximate cost comparisons are as follows:

- Rx Tran: 14 languages for \$70-\$90/month
- IRCO Language Bank: 100 directions in 1 language: \$250 one-time payment. This option is a medication translation bank that allows pharmacists to copy and paste translated instructions onto medication labels.
- ScriptAbility by En-Vision America: Starting at \$960.00 annually/25 languages - Prices vary with options. Translated sigs and warnings. Unlimited labeling space and multiple font sizes using ScriptView labels. No integration required, but available.
- FDB’s Meducation: Multilingual sigs and monographs in over 30 languages. Pricing varies by use and content. Standalone and native workflow integration(s) available.

Nothing in this document is intended as legal advice. If you need legal advice, please consult an attorney.