

Tips For Working With Professional Interpreters

The role of an interpreter is to facilitate communication between people who do not share a common language. Interpreting involves converting and delivering, as accurately as possible, a message from one language into an equivalent message in another language.

Professional interpreters:

- Facilitate communication between two speakers. They **do not** conduct the interview.
- Introduce themselves to the service provider and the client. This includes obtaining permission from the client to interpret on their behalf.
- Render all messages accurately and completely, without additions, omissions, distortions, substitutions or explanations. They are **not** there to give advice or provide opinions, even on matters relating to cultural practices. They remain **impartial**.
- Maintain confidentiality and do not disclose information, unless required by law.
- Interpret everything said (including side conversations), exactly as it is said. They maintain the register, style and tone of the message (including obscenities).
- Use the first person when interpreting. For example, if the patient says: “I have a sore leg”, the interpreter will say: “I have a sore leg”, rather than “the client says he has a sore leg”.
- Use a consecutive mode of interpretation. They listen to the speaker and when the speaker pauses after a sentence or two, they deliver the message in the other language. They **do not** provide simultaneous interpretation (also known as conference interpretation).
- May take notes to aid their memory. These will be destroyed at the end of the appointment.
- May need to intervene for clarification in order to maintain **accuracy**.
- Provide sight translations (conversion of written material in one language to a spoken version in another language), **only** in the presence of the service provider. It is still the service provider’s role to explain the content of written material. Interpreters do not perform written translations.
- Perform their duties in accordance with the *Language Access Interpreter Services Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Interpreters*.

Tips for service providers:

- Introduce yourself and allow the interpreter to introduce themselves fully in both languages.
- Face and speak directly to the client, not the interpreter (i.e. Mr. Ramirez, tell me why you are here today).
- Speak clearly and slowly, pause frequently and avoid technical terms, jargon, slang, and jokes. Give simple, full explanations (in manageable chunks) as you would normally.
- Remember that everything said will be interpreted, including side conversations.
- Keep in mind that sometimes there are no direct equivalent terms in another language. Be patient if the interpreter requests an explanation and then requires more time (and more words) to convey unfamiliar concepts.

If you have feedback, questions or concerns, e-mail languageaccess@sharedhealthmb.ca or call 204-940-8564.

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