

Working with Interpreters

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The Interpreter's Role

- ❖ To facilitate communication between two or more people who use different languages, being either spoken or signed.
- ❖ To place non-English-speaking participants on an equal footing with those who understand English to the extent reasonably possible

The Interpreter's **Job**

- ❖ **To render everything said in the source language, into the target language accurately without omitting, adding, embellishing, or summarizing anything spoken or written**

Categories of Interpreters

28 U.S.C. §1827

- ▶ Certified
- ▶ Qualified
- ▶ Language Skilled

Federal Court Interpreters Act 28 U.S.C. §1827

Certified Interpreter

- ▶ Has been tested through a valid and reliable testing instrument

Federal Court Interpreters Act 28 U.S.C. §1827

Qualified Interpreter

Category for languages that certification does not exist but the interpreter has had training, experience, and is certified by the United Nations for Conference Interpreters.

Federal Court Interpreters Act 28 U.S.C. §1827

Language Skilled Interpreter

Category for languages that do not have training or qualification mechanisms but bilingual person can prove to the Court that they can competently communicate in English and the other language.

Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

1. Accuracy and Completeness
2. Representation of Qualifications
3. Impartiality and Avoidance of Conflict of Interest
4. Professional Demeanor
5. Confidentiality
6. Restriction of Public Comment
7. Scope of Practice
8. Assessing and Reporting
9. Impediments to Compliance
10. Duty to Report Ethical Violations
11. Professional Development

Working with Interpreters



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Working with Interpreters - Pre-session

- ▶ Confirm language match.
 - ▶ The language identified, may not be the language spoken by the individual. Also variations in language based on region or dialect can impact the effectiveness of the interpretation.
- ▶ Explain confidentiality, roles and responsibilities as well as basic guidelines on how the session will be conducted.
- ▶ Establish a signal for the interpreter to ask for a pause, or to have the speaker slow down.

Working with Interpreters - Clear Communication

- ▶ Speak in short, simple sentences.
 - ▶ Avoid jargon and slang. Keep everything clear and to the point. Explain legal terms in simple language. Remember - there may be differences of culture, world view and education.
- ▶ Speak slowly
 - ▶ Speed is dangerous. Vital information is often lost because untrained interpreters have less developed memory skills than trained interpreters.
- ▶ Ask one question at a time
 - ▶ Often, if two questions are asked the first question is ignored. By the same token, give steps or instructions one at a time also.
- ▶ Check for understanding.
 - ▶ If you ask a client, "Did you understand?" never assume that a nod or a smile means agreement. (It may indicate respect of deference to authority.) Instead, after conveying important information, ask the client to repeat in his or her own words what you have said. Then you will know what the client has actually understood.

Working with Interpreters - Clear Communication (2)

- ▶ Have the interpreter "sight translate" all vital documents.
 - ▶ If the client must sign or understand an important document, the interpreter should read it silently first to be sure of understanding it and ask the provider any questions about terms. Then the interpreter should translate it orally, line by line. You should be present at all times to answer any questions. Do not ask the interpreter to sight translate a legal document unless he or she is court-certified. Never ask the interpreter to summarize a document, however long. Do not leave the client along with the interpreter during sight translation or any other time. You are always needed to answer questions. The interpreter is not permitted to answer the client's questions.
- ▶ Do not allow side conversations.
 - ▶ A common mistake occurs when untrained interpreters start talking with the client "on the side." Do not allow it. Gently remind the interpreter that everything is to be interpreted.

Working with Interpreters - Clear Communication (3)

- ▶ Maintain control.
 - ▶ An untrained interpreter will often try to take control. Be firm: the client is your client. Stay focused on the relationship between you and the client. The interpreter should remain in the background.
- ▶ Overcome misunderstandings.
 - ▶ One exception to the background role of the interpreter is when a misunderstanding arises. In the case, the interpreter should step in if communication is not clear. Perhaps a legal term has caused confusion. Perhaps there is a cultural barrier. It may be important for the interpreter to step in as the interpreter to point out the confusion so that you and the client can try to remove the barrier to communication.
- ▶ Do not say anything that you would not like the client to hear.
 - ▶ It is astonishing to hear that educated professionals insult foreign-born clients in the presence of the clients or say other embarrassing things. But they do; interpreters complain frequently about this problem. Remember: an interpreter is required to interpret everything that is said.

Working with Interpreters: Trauma Considerations

Be mindful that:

- ▶ The linguistic community (including Deaf) is a small community, and interpreters know the lives of many members.
- ▶ Not all interpreters are trained in or thoroughly knowledgeable about DV/SA and trauma informed practices.
- ▶ Some interpreters are themselves victims or perpetrators.
- ▶ You may need more time
- ▶ Interpreters have privilege of power: having the status of being “Hearing” or can speak English.
- ▶ Victims may specify a gender preference for an interpreter. You should consider time, resources, and any exigency.

Working with Interpreters: Who Should NOT Interpret

Children and family members should NEVER be used!

Why?

- Traumatic and personal details
- Untrained skills lead to inaccuracy, summarization, and
- incomplete information
- Advice
- Barriers to your professional job
- Individual may be subpoenaed to testify because not a qualified interpreter

Working with Interpreters: Spotting a Bad Interpreter

1. Can you understand the interpreter?
 - a. Evaluate the interpreters English speaking ability
2. Does the client look confused?
3. Does the interpreter appear confused?
4. Is the interpreter engaging in side conversations?
5. Is the interpreter summarizing?
6. Is everything being interpreted?
7. Is there a change in your clients demeanor?

Working with interpreters: Strategies (Telephonic)

Tips for working with telephone interpreters, available at:

<https://www.lep.gov/resources/TIPS%20FOR%20WORKING%20WITH%20TELEPHONE%20INTERPRETERS%20%203-19-14%20%20508.pdf>

Federal Coordination and Compliance Section

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH TELEPHONE INTERPRETERS

BEFORE YOU START:

- Know the target language (and preferably the dialect) for interpretation ahead of time
- Listen to a demonstration:
- Explore the vendor's website:
- Know how to use your conference call or three-way calling features
- If your meeting is longer than 30 minutes, try to schedule an in-person interpreter

If you have line quality problems before reaching an interpreter, press to be transferred. Ask the representative to stay on the line to check for sound quality.

If you have problems connecting to an interpreter, call Customer Service:

PLACING THE CALL:

Call: []
(Client ID/Access Code:)

The number and Client ID should not be shared with outside entities.

AT THE START OF THE CALL:

Record the interpreter's ID number, introduce yourself and the interpreter, and define the role of the interpreter in the conversation. Be sure to let all parties know that they may be asked to stop, rephrase, or clarify throughout the call.

AN INTERPRETATION MAY NOT BE GOING SMOOTHLY IF:

- The interpretation is too long or too short compared to the length of the material being interpreted;
- The interpreter repeatedly asks for clarification;
- It sounds like the interpreter is having a side conversation with the LEP individual;
- The LEP caller corrects or appears to disagree with the interpreter;
- The LEP caller begins to speak in halting and incorrect English;
- The interpreter or the LEP caller is becoming increasingly impatient;
- It sounds like the interpreter is using many English terms to convey the meaning of your conversation; or
- The interpreter does not conduct himself or herself in a professional manner.

PROVIDING FEEDBACK: If you encounter technical problems or have questions, contact your section's Language Access Point of Contact:

✓ Talk directly to the LEP individual, not the interpreter. For example, "What is your name?" and not "Please ask the caller for their name."

✓ If the LEP individual is willing to share, **obtain the caller's phone number** in case of accidental disconnection.

✓ **Pause after one or two sentences** to allow for interpretation

✓ **Ask one question at a time.**

✓ **Speak clearly** at a normal pace and refrain from technical language.

If you think something is wrong with the interpretation, feel free to ask the LEP individual:
"Would you mind repeating back to me what I said, so that I can make sure I am communicating clearly?"

If you believe that your communication with the LEP individual has been compromised by the quality of interpretation, **END THE CALL**.

Call the telephone interpretation service to obtain a new interpreter. Once you have successfully completed your call with a new interpreter, please provide feedback as noted.

Say **"END OF CALL"** to the interpreter when the call is completed.

For additional copies or technical assistance in language access matters, contact the Federal Coordination and Compliance Section at LEP@usdoj.gov

April 28, 2014

Resources

API-GBV, Considerations When Using Interpreters for Victims with Limited English Proficiency <https://s3.amazonaws.com/gbv-wp-uploads/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/19185838/TipSheets-limitedEnglishproficiency-ITARC-2015.pdf>

API-GBV, How to Work with Interpreters <https://s3.amazonaws.com/gbv-wp-uploads/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/19185833/TipSheets-howtoWorkWithInterpreters-ITARC-2015.pdf>

API-GBV, How to Address Problems With Interpretation <https://s3.amazonaws.com/gbv-wp-uploads/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/19185832/TipSheets-howtoAddressProblemsWithInterpretation-ITARC-2015.pdf>

Additional Resources

LEP.gov:

On Choosing a Language Access Provider, available at:

<https://www.lep.gov/resources/leptatool.htm>

What does it mean to be a certified linguist, available at:

<https://www.lep.gov/resources/TRUST%20ME%20I'M%20CERTIFIED%20%203-19-14%20%20508.pdf>

Tips for working with telephone interpreters, available at:

<https://www.lep.gov/resources/TIPS%20FOR%20WORKING%20WITH%20TELEPHONE%20INTERPRETERS%20%203-19-14%20%20508.pdf>

Interpretation Technical Assistance Resource Center
Cannon Han, Senior Program Manager
415-568-3314 | chan@api-gbv.org

For Court Technical Assistance
National Council on Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ)
Stephine Bowman, JD, Program Attorney
(775) 507-4777 | sbowman@ncjfcj.org