



2. Using Interpreters

Tips for using on-site interpreters

- Arrange a place where the interview can be conducted in private.
- Allow for extra time.
- Arrange seating to facilitate communication between yourself and the parent/guardian. The ideal seating arrangement is a triangle, with participants at equal distances from each other, so that eye contact can be maintained at all times (if culturally appropriate)
- Introduce yourself and the interpreter.
- Explain both your and the interpreter's role.
- Stress that both you and the interpreter are bound by codes of ethics to maintain the confidentiality of the interview.
- Speak directly to the patient/client as you would with an English speaker.
- Always use the first person e.g. How are you feeling? not (to the interpreter) Ask her how she is feeling?
- Don't let the interpreter's presence change your role in the interview. It is not the interpreter's role to conduct the interview.
- Speak slowly and clearly but naturally, if

possible do not raise your voice. Use plain English where possible.

- Allow the interpreter to translate in regular and short intervals.
- Summarise periodically when complex issues are involved. If the person does not understand it is your responsibility (not the interpreter's) to explain more simply.
- Avoid long discussions with the interpreter. If you need to talk to the interpreter directly then the interpreter should explain to the patient about the nature of the conversation.
- Closing the interview, check that the person has understood the key messages in your interview. Ask if they have any questions.
- Thank both the parent and the interpreter. Say good-bye formally.

Tips for using telephone interpreters

- When you phone TIS they will ask you for various details and the name, preferred language and contact number of the person you want to call.
- The TIS operator will come back on the line with an interpreter and put you both on hold while they phone the client.

- Introduce yourself to the interpreter and let them know who you are calling and where you are from.
- When TIS operator comes back on-line with the person you are calling you can commence the conversation.
- Speak directly to the person you have called.
- Speak clearly and modify the speed of your speech.
- Try to use short sentences in plain English when you speak.
- Pause after two or three sentences to allow the interpreter to speak.
- Clearly indicate the end of the session to the interpreter.
- Make allowances for possible clarification by the interpreter because he/she has no visual cues (eg body language) to assist in the interpreting.
- Thank both the parent and the interpreter. Say good-bye formally.

Information compiled from the following sources:

How to Work with Interpreters © The State of Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet 2004

Working with Interpreters in Health Settings, Queensland Health publication

School's in For Refugees: Whole-School Guide to Refugee Readiness. ©The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc., 2004