

## TIPS FOR FACILITATING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION VIA AN INTERPRETER

1. Speak to the client, not the interpreter, and maintain culturally appropriate eye contact with the client.
2. Speak to the client directly using first person “I” and second person “you”, rather than “he” or “she”, to elicit a more accurate understanding of the words and emotions being expressed.
3. Avoid using technical language, metaphors and acronyms.
4. Repetition can be effective in assisting understanding.
5. Use short, simple sentences.
6. Pause after one or two sentences to allow the interpreter to relay the message.
7. You may wish to use diagrams or pictures to increase understanding.
8. Ask the client whether you are speaking at an appropriate pace or if any clarification is required.
9. Ask for feedback during the consultations to ensure that the client is satisfied with the interpreting process.



This study was supported in part by the SUNY Buffalo State Institute for Community Health Promotion Collaborative Research Initiative.

## WORKING WITH AN INTERPRETER



## USING CHILDREN AS INTERPRETERS IS PROBLEMATIC, BECAUSE:

1. Oftentimes, the only family member available who speaks the native language and English is the client's child.
2. Remember the potential shifts in family dynamics and power arrangements that can occur as a result of the child playing the role of interpreter.
3. Children might not possess or understand advanced vocabulary, so interpretations might not be precise or accurate.
4. Children should not be exposed to information about their parent, that is private, difficult to hear, or inappropriate for the child's age and maturity level.

## BEFORE BOOKING AN INTERPRETER

1. **clarify the appropriate language and dialect.** You should not assume that an interpreter speaks the same language as the client and can understand all dialects.
2. **consider the client's ethnicity and religion.** The interpreter's ethnicity and religion may be important to some clients, particularly if the client has come from a country and/or religious sect where there has been political unrest or conflict.
3. **enquire whether the client needs a male or female interpreter.** The client may be bound by cultural or religious practice or may simply have a preference for an interpreter of a particular gender.

Source: Miller Scarnato, Jenn. 2017. "Language Interpreter: Social Worker Tips for Working with Interpreters." MSW Careers. (<https://mswcareers.com/language-interpreter/>).

## PREPARING FOR WORK WITH AN INTERPRETER

1. The interpreter should interpret **all communication** to and from the client, **not summarizing** or leaving anything out.
2. The interpreter should provide **precise and accurate** interpretations, conveying the client's and social worker's actual words, instead of the interpreter's own ideas.
3. Both parties should use **hand signals** for when pauses are needed. This will enable the interpreter to keep up without being disruptive to the session.
4. The social worker and client should **look at and address one another directly**, rather than looking at or addressing the interpreter. This allows for a more natural flow of communication.
5. **The interpreter should begin the session** by communicating all of this information to the client, so that all parties begin the session on the same page and with the same understanding of the role of the interpreter.

