

SECTION 2

Communicating Through an Interpreter (continued)

A Multilingual Session

- Saying everything in two languages will make the meeting take twice as long. This means you need two appointment time slots.
- Speak to and look at the person you are meeting with.
- Speak slower instead of louder.
- Most of the time the interpreter is providing word for word translation.
 - Sometimes a word used does not exist in one of the languages, and a long description is needed to explain a simple point.
 - At other times, the interpreter may have to ask questions to make sure that the meaning is clear.
- Watch how much you say at one time. Your words are important. The interpreter can only remember so much at a time.
- Try to make your points one at a time and as directly as possible.
- If you do not feel that you are being understood, ask questions to check.
- Getting comfortable working through an interpreter takes time and can be frustrating.
- You may feel uncomfortable; remember the other person probably does also. Everyone is doing his or her best.
- Have fun!

The Interpreter's Introduction

It is important to begin the session with an introduction of the interpreter's role. Interpreters should introduce themselves and explain their role.

Hello, my name is _____. I will be the interpreter today. When either of you talk, I will translate what you say. You can speak directly to each other in your usual way. My role is to strictly translate information. I am not a part of your meeting, and I cannot choose what to translate. I am bound as an interpreter to translate everything that is said. If the meaning is not coming across in either direction, I will let you know and ask questions as needed.

The introduction is then repeated in the second language of the session.

If the interpreter does not explain their role to the group, feel free to ask them to.

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Pre-meeting Contact with the Interpreter

It is not always possible, and it is GREAT if you can speak with the interpreter before the meeting. A phone call is fine.

- If you are being served by an interpreter for the first time, review what you are expecting. “Summary of Ethical Standards for Interpreters.” (p. 6). You can say, “I’m sure you are familiar with these, and I would like to share the interpretation standards I am used to working with.”
- Find out the type of interpretation they will be providing: consecutive or simultaneous.
 - Consecutive Interpretation: The interpreter will go back and forth with the speaker, each of you speaking a few sentences at a time. With consecutive interpretation everything must be said twice so it will take at least twice as long. This means you need two appointment time slots.
 - Simultaneous Interpretation: The interpreter will be speaking at the same time as the speaker. When equipment is used, the interpreter will speak into a microphone and you will have a transmitter with a head set.

The interpreter will be a few words to a sentence behind the speaker. When using interpretation equipment the interpreter will be off to the side of the group. Sometimes the interpreter will sit or stand between the people and speak softly in the ear of the listener. It is a good idea to test how fast you speak with the interpreter before the session.

- Tell the interpreter what you will be talking about in the meeting. It will be easier for the interpreter to keep up if they know what you will be talking about. It also gives them a chance to ask questions.

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Resources: *Speaking Through or With an Interpreter* by Wawa Baczynskyj, LICSW. Metropolitan-Indochinese Children and Adolescent Services (MICAS).

Additional Resources: NYSME staff sharing in workshops 1997 to 2005.

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