

# SECTION 2

## Including Interpretation Duties in a Job Description

### Providing Multilingual Service

To be effective in today's environment, agencies must have the capacity to successfully provide service to people for whom English is not the first language. It takes planning to provide quality service in multiple languages whether you have bilingual staff or not.

### Assess Skill Level

- Interpretation is a highly specialized skill that has a direct impact on the quality of service. Being bilingual does not automatically qualify a person to serve as an interpreter. It is the employer's responsibility to assess skill level. (*You may need an outside agency or professional to conduct the assessment if you do not have the skill in house.*)
- Written language and spoken language are two separate skills. Some individuals have the capacity to provide oral interpretation and are unable to provide written translation. Others have the capacity for written translation and are unable to provide oral interpretation. Utilize people based upon their documented area of strength.
- Provide skill development training based upon the needs of staff.

### The Job Description

- Clearly identify when, where, how, and for whom interpretation should be provided.

- Identify the full time equivalent (FTE) of the job that should be devoted to interpretation.
- Reassess the actual FTE being spent on interpretation annually.
- Expected outcomes should reflect interpretation. For example, a caseworker who provides interpretation for others and is often pulled away from their work should have a lower case load than one who does not provide interpretation.
- Adopt standards for interpretation. Insist on quality and consistency.

### The Environment

- Provide training to all staff. Working through an interpreter is also a skill.
- Educate program participants. Assure that they see the difference between interpretation and advocacy. Insist that staff clearly communicate the role they are operating in at all times.
- When agency staff is interpreting for participants at other locations such as schools or doctors offices, encourage participants to introduce their interpreter and the interpreter's role whenever possible. It is an empowering act to introduce your interpreter, and it is a subtle way of reinforcing to the agency professional that the person being served is in charge of their life.

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**Resources:** *Interpreting: An Introduction*, Chapter 6, Role, Ethics, and Etiquette of Interpreting, Nancy Frishberg, 1990, RID  
Kathy Miraglia, B.A., C.S.C., Coordinator of Interpreter Services, University of Rochester  
Patricia Leadley, Spanish Language Interpreter, University of Rochester  
NYSME staff sharing in workshops 1997 to 2005.  
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