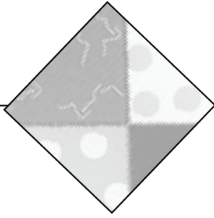


Guidelines for Working with the Interpreter

Preparation

- Introduce yourself, your role, and the program you represent to the interpreter. Learn about the interpreter's background and previous experience. If a qualified interpreter is not available (including interpreters that the family has recommended or prefers), avoid, if at all possible, using family members.
- Review the following:
 - a. The purpose or goals of the meeting, session, or visit
 - b. The type of information to be discussed or needed, including basic topics and corresponding terms, phrases, instructions, and questions that will be used
 - c. The forms, assessment tools, activities, or reports that will be presented
 - d. The time scheduled for the encounter and whether there is flexibility in the schedule
- Share a brief description of the family (parents, child[ren], extended family members, and/or other individuals) you will be meeting.
- State the importance of confidentiality, and identify any particularly sensitive or critical issues that will be covered in the session. Reiterate the importance of confidentiality with the interpreter when appropriate.
- Clarify expectations regarding the interpreter's role, and discuss any specific questions or concerns that he or she may have.
- Do not prematurely judge the skills and abilities of a new interpreter. Allow some time to develop familiarity and mutual trust.
- Allow the interpreter to meet briefly with the family members to develop initial rapport and to informally assess their language and ethnic characteristics and sociocultural and educational background (if appropriate and if there is time); the interpreter may further wish to inform the service provider whether social class, education level, age, or gender differences between him- or herself and the family may affect his or her effectiveness as an interpreter.
- Learn proper protocols and forms of address (including a few greetings and social phrases) in the family members' primary language and what names they wish to be called and the correct pronunciation.
- Learn common words, essential sentences, and key terms in the family members' language so you can selectively attend to them during interpreter–family member interchanges.

• • • • **VIDEO 4:** *Collaborating with Interpreters in Early Childhood Special Education* • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •



Guidelines for Working with the Interpreter (*continued*)

- Become familiar with, acknowledge, and respect subcultural differences, national and/or regional dialects, and diversity among the specific ethnic groups that you are serving, but recognize your limitations of knowledge and your understanding of specific cultural and linguistic characteristics.

Interaction

- Introduce yourself and the interpreter at the beginning of the meeting, describe your respective roles, and clarify mutual expectations and the purpose of the encounter. Assure the family members of confidentiality, and be sensitive to their needs and requests for privacy.
- Be sensitive to the possibility that family members may be in crisis and experiencing anxiety or other emotional states at the time of the encounter. They may have added difficulty with communicating through an interpreter or in English if they are somewhat proficient and no interpreter is available or being utilized.
- Do not assume that the family members who are present do not understand English.
- Note that although family members may understand and speak English with varying degrees of proficiency, they may prefer to speak in their primary language and thus request an interpreter (particularly when discussing more complex information or selected issues that require greater English vocabulary and/or that are emotionally sensitive).
- Do not assume that because a family member speaks and understands English, he or she also can read and write in English (this also may be the case for his or her primary language).
- Address your remarks and questions directly to the family members; look at and listen to each family member as he or she speaks; and observe nonverbal communication and be alert to indications of anxiety, confusion, or difficulty in understanding.
- Avoid body language or gestures that may be offensive or misunderstood as well as side conversations, whispering, and/or writing while the interpreter is interpreting.
- Use a positive tone of voice and positive facial expressions that sincerely convey respect for and interest in the family members, and address them in a calm, unhurried manner.
- Speak clearly and somewhat more slowly (but not loudly); allow adequate time for the interpreter to interpret, and listen carefully to the family members' responses.
- Limit your remarks and questions to a few sentences; then, pause to allow interpretation and avoid giving too much information or long, complex discussions of several topics in a single session.

