

Working Effectively With Interpreters in Home Visiting

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Learning Objectives

At the end of today's presentation, participants will be able to:

- Explain the role and responsibilities of interpreters.
- Identify the different modes of interpretation and the strengths and limitations of each.
- Apply best practices for collaborating effectively with interpreters during home visits.
- Reflect on opportunities to enhance quality.

So, what is Language Access?

Language access is achieved when individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) can communicate effectively with your program staff and participate in your programs and activities.





Language Access is Access to Services

Language Access is Equity, Integration, and Participation

Education



Financial



Food



Medical



- Mental Health Services
- Public Safety Services
- Housing
- Emergency Medical Care
- Maternal Healthcare
- Preventative Healthcare
- Education
- Public Utilities
- Public Transportation
- Financial Services
- Libraries and Cultural Institutions
- Professional Services
- Daily Navigation
- Communicating with community
- Shopping/ Meeting Basic Needs
- Government
- Public Benefits
- Social Services
- Resources & Connections
- Scheduling/ Phone
- Community norms
- Law enforcement
- Drivers Licensing
- Home ownership
- And many more...



Everyone deserves to be understood.

Group Discussion:

In breakout groups, please share a story with your peer(s) about a time in your life when you couldn't communicate, felt like you didn't have a voice, or felt like you weren't able to be understood.

Please focus on identifying and describing *how this made you feel*. (Frustrated, powerless, afraid, anxious, etc.)

When we return from breakout rooms, please enter some of the feelings you identified onto the sticky notes!

- Frustrated
- Afraid
- “Other”
- Embarrassed
- Isolated
- Anxious
- Angry
- Disenfranchised
- “Less than”
- Helpless
- Ostracized
- Difficult
- Alone
- Misunderstood
- Disregarded
- Unsure
- Stupid
- Disregarded
- Hopeless
- Depressed
- Unwelcome
- Not belonging
- Want to go home
- And many more...

- Mental Health Services
- Public Safety Services
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Interpreters: Roles and Responsibilities

Interpreters, especially in home-visitation and “community interpretation” situations, are sometimes expected to complete tasks or get involved in ways that are outside of the scope of their role.

It is very important to understand what is and what is not appropriate for an interpreter to do so that you can most effectively communicate with LEP individuals.



Roles and Responsibilities

- Core facilitation of communication
- Ethical & professional responsibilities
- Accuracy and accountability
- Cultural and interpersonal facilitation (on a limited basis)
- Administrative and practical responsibilities



Common Issues Outside the “Scope” of Professional Interpretation

- Asking the interpreter to summarize, soften, or change what someone said instead of interpreting it accurately and completely (e.g., “Don’t tell her all of that, just say it’s fine”).
- Expecting the interpreter to take sides, persuade, or advocate (“Ask them to agree to this,” “Explain why my proposal is better”).
- Asking the interpreter to assist with administrative tasks: running errands, filling out forms for a party, escorting clients alone, or handling tasks unrelated to language access.
- Asking the interpreter to give advice or opinions on legal, medical, or business decisions (“What would you choose?” “Tell me if this is a good idea”).

Common Issues Outside the “Scope” of Professional Interpretation

- Requesting the interpreter to withhold or hide information from one party (“Don’t tell the doctor about this symptom”).
- Trying to have private, off-record conversations with the interpreter about the other party (this breaks impartiality and can compromise confidentiality).
- Asking the interpreter to interpret written documents **in great detail** on the spot or to translate documents.
- Asking interpreters to plan or manage session/event (choosing interpretation mode, room setup, equipment arrangements) instead of using them primarily for live language mediation.

Case Study: Administrative Overlap

At a service review for an Early On family, the service coordinator asks an interpreter to “help mom fill out all these forms and explain what secondary Medicaid is.”

This crosses into counseling and administrative work rather than neutral interpretation; the appropriate role is to interpret the coordinator’s questions and explanations so the family and coordinator can communicate directly.



Common Interpretation Modalities

- Over-the-Phone Interpretation (OPI)
- Video Remote Interpretation (VRI)
- In-Person Interpretation
- Sight Translation



OPI: Over-the-Phone Interpretation

CONS:

- Quality control is a serious issue
- Not appropriate for meaningful, lengthy or specialized content communication
- Nonverbal cues are lost and accuracy is poor as a result
- Frequent technical/audio issues

PROS:

- Quick and convenient
- Cost effective
- Remote accessibility
- Good fit for phone-based interactions

VRI: Video Remote Interpretation

CONS:

- Quality control can be an issue
- Visual cues and other nonverbal cues are improved over OPI but may still be lost
- Less personal, unable to adapt as easily to the situation
- Frequent technical issues and poor video quality

PROS:

- Quick and convenient
- Remote accessibility
- May be pre-scheduled or on-demand
- Good option for rare languages or in remote areas where in-person is difficult

In-person Interpretation

CONS:

- Most expensive
- Sometimes families will develop dependence on interpreters
- Interpreters may be part of the subject's community (privacy concerns)
- Risk of interpreter cancellation

PROS:

- Gold standard for quality
- Much more personal, professional, and trustworthy
- Interpreters can be vetted or chosen based on desired features
- In-person interpreters are scheduled and can prepare in advance

Pitfalls of Machine Translation

- Meaning can be lost because if there is no way to incorporate context
- Quality of Translation is dependent on language pair
- Hallucinations and errors
- No system for error recognition or correction without human intervention



Practical Skills

- Pause after each sentence to allow the subject to process the information.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Interpreters should never answer questions on behalf of the subject.
- Look at the subject, not the interpreter.



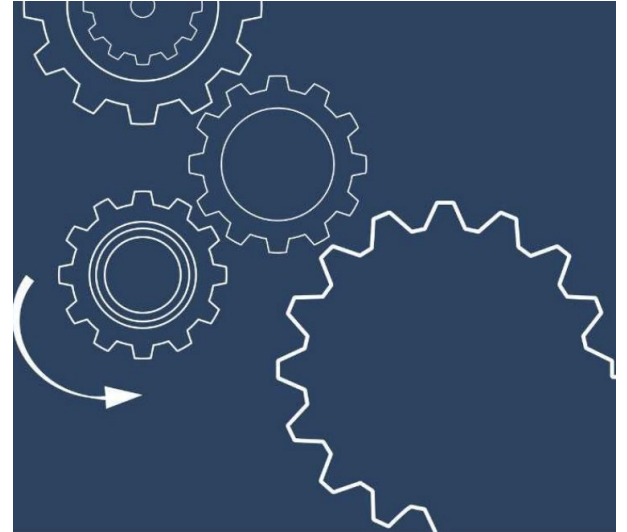
Practical Skills

- Introduce yourself to the subject, then introduce the interpreter
- Position your body so that you are facing the subject, with the interpreter off to one side
- Do not have side conversations with the interpreter without including the subject
- Do not make comments that you do not wish to be interpreted



Systemic Fluency

- Make sure staff is trained
- Make sure that all of your vital materials are translated in advance
- Provide notice that services are available
- Make sure you have a contract in place with a language services provider
- Designate a budget line
- Make language access a part of the regular narrative



 THE FORM

1. NAME _____	6. FAVORITE COLOR _____
FAMILY? _____	_____
BIRTH _____	WHY? _____
2. YEARS _____	7. LANGUAGE _____
3. SEX YES _____	YES _____ NO _____
NO _____	8. IF ENGLISH _____
4. STATUS _____	WHAT KIND _____
_____	KOJAK _____
5. DEGREES _____	REGAN _____
CHECK ONE, V, X _____	EDITH _____
PHD _____	9. FAVORITE DISEASE _____
PDQ _____	
MA _____	
MA _____	
BM _____	

Best Practices: Untrained Bilingual “Helpers”

- Family members and other untrained “bilingual helpers” should never be asked to interpret.
- Bilingual helpers are not trained interpreters and may not understand the terminology used, will not understand the ethical.
- Bias/ conflict, emotional distress, privacy and confidentiality concerns, accuracy and completeness, boundaries, and interpersonal conflict are just some of the issues that arise when untrained bilingual helpers are used.



Best Practices: Before the Session

- Schedule trained interpreters whenever possible and, if appropriate, match gender or dialect to the family's preferences for comfort and safety.
- Allow extra time for interpreted visits; they usually take longer than monolingual visits.
- Brief the interpreter in advance (by phone or email) about goals, who will be present, sensitive topics that may arise, and any key terms or materials you'll use.
- Schedule an interpreter according to the gender and dialect preferences of the subject.



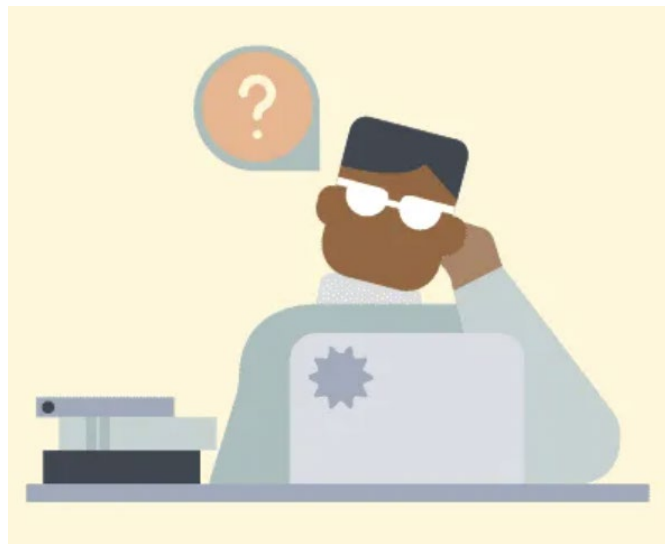
Best Practices: During the Session

- Clarify the interpreter's role at the start: they are there to interpret, not to give advice, make decisions, or take sides.
- Invite the interpreter to signal you if there is a cultural misunderstanding or if something needs to be rephrased in a more culturally appropriate way, while still respecting family privacy.
- Let both the interpreter and the subjects know that side conversations should be avoided.
- Use “teach-back” near the end of the visit: ask the caregiver to explain in their own words what they understood about next steps, safety plans, or recommendations.



Best Practices: After the Session

- When appropriate and within policy, debrief briefly with the interpreter about logistics or cultural points that might help you plan better future visits.
- Note how long interpreted visits took, what worked well, and any communication barriers, so you can schedule appropriate time and supports next time.
- Report any issues or feedback to your language services provider so that they can be corrected moving forward.



Case Study: Side Conversations

An interpreter, social worker, and family are together in a family's home. The family has worked with this interpreter for months, and they have developed a rapport. The interpreter and family are casually chatting in the family's first language, and the social worker cannot understand what is being said.

This blurs the boundaries of the interpreter's role. The appropriate behavior is to redirect side conversations by interpreting **everything** that is being said, or for the interpreter to directly state that they are unable to engage.

Conversely, the interpreter should not engage in side conversations with the social worker that exclude the family!

