

Working with Interpreters Tip Sheet

Instructions to Give to Interpreters

1. Interpret everything that is said.
 - ◆ Use the first (“I”) and second (“you”) person.
 - ◆ Do not omit, edit, polish or add to what was said.
2. Interpret the meaning as accurately as possible.
3. Do not have side conversations with the LEP person.
4. Never answer for the LEP person.
5. You may ask speakers to do any of the following:
 - ◆ Pause
 - ◆ Repeat
 - ◆ Slow down
6. If needed, ask for clarification or a break.

Instructions to Give to Clients

1. Explain the role of the interpreter: to be a conduit ONLY.
2. Speak slowly with only one or two sentences at a time.
3. Be patient — the interpreter may ask you to slow down or repeat what you just said.
4. Explain words or concepts upon the interpreter’s request.
5. Allow the interpreter to finish interpreting before speaking.
6. Do not ask the interpreters any questions or have any side conversations with the interpreter. Please ask me your questions and address any concerns with me.

When You Work with Interpreters

1. Schedule additional time for any meeting.
2. Walk through the instructions above with the interpreter.
3. Pay attention to seating/ positioning so that everyone is clear that the conversation is between you and the client, not the interpreter and the client.
4. During the interpretation:
 - ◆ Maintain eye contact with the LEP person.
 - ◆ Speak directly to the LEP person using first person (“I”)
 - ◆ Speak unhurriedly, clearly and with pauses.
 - ◆ Speak one or two sentences at a time.
 - ◆ Allow the interpreter to finish interpreting before speaking.
 - ◆ Explain words or concepts upon interpreter’s request.
 - ◆ Be aware of cultural differences. Ask interpreter for clarification of cultural differences if needed.
 - ◆ Minimize slang, idioms and metaphors.
 - ◆ Avoid compound questions.
5. Always maintain control.
 - ◆ Ask for full interpretation of side conversations.
 - ◆ Do not allow the interpreter to answer for the LEP person.
 - ◆ Inquire about interpretation that is longer or shorter than expected.
6. Debrief with the interpreter at the end to address issues or concerns.
 - ◆ Discuss any questions or concerns that emerged during the session.
 - ◆ Invite suggestions from the interpreter on how you can work better with interpreters.