

Best Practices for Communicating with families using an Interpreter

Use these:

- Introduce yourself and state your role to the interpreter.
- During the meeting, speak directly to the parent, not to the interpreter. Make eye contact with the parent.
- Limit side conversations.
- Speak slowly, maintaining consistent volume.
- Take more frequent breaks between sentences than you normally would.
- Take pauses that are long enough for the interpreter to think about and express the interpretation.
- Speak at an even pace in relatively short segments. Pause so the interpreter can interpret.
- Acknowledge the interpreter as a professional in communication. Respect his or her role.
- Be aware that many concepts you express have no linguistic or conceptual equivalent in other languages. The interpreter may have to paint word pictures of many terms you use. This may take longer than your original speech.
- Give the interpreter time to restructure information in his/her mind and present it in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. Speaking English does not mean thinking in English.

Avoid doing these:

- Highly idiomatic speech
- Complicated sentence structure
- Sentence fragments
- Changing your idea in the middle of a sentence
- Asking multiple questions at one time.
- Avoid making assumptions or generalizations about your student or their experiences. Common practices or beliefs in a community may not apply to everyone in that community.

Consider these:

- Allow time for a pre-session with the interpreter. The pre-session is an opportunity to be clear about the nature of the upcoming encounter and any particular concerns that the provider would like to address regarding the student. This provides the interpreter with the information necessary to make any adjustments in his/her interpreting.

For example, you may discuss whether or not the interpreting will be done in consecutive or simultaneous mode, whether there will be highly technical language that will be used, whether subsequent adjustments in register will need to be made, and whether or not the content of the session is going to be highly emotional or intense. It is also an opportunity to raise any cultural concerns that may be pertinent.

ASL interpreters

- Address the deaf person directly, using singular phrases. This is the person you are having a conversation with.
- Provide the interpreter as much information as possible, as far in advance as possible. This helps the interpreter be prepared and alert you to any potential ethical conflicts.
- Use the interpreter to engage deaf individuals in conversation. Remember — interpreters are there to facilitate a deaf/ hearing interaction.
- Don't talk to the interpreter like the deaf person isn't there.
- Don't talk to the deaf person in the third person. The interpreter is interpreting exactly what you say. Saying "tell him/her..." just confuses the message.
- Speak at your natural pace but be aware that the interpreter may wait to hear and understand a complete thought before beginning to interpret. The interpreter will let you know if you need to repeat or slow down.
- Two interpreters will be assigned to a job over one hour in length. Interpreters working in a team allow communication to flow smoothly and thereby minimize distractions to the meeting process. One interpreter will actively interpret for 20-30 minutes while the other provides back-up to the active interpreter. The interpreters switch every 20-30 minutes.