



Guidelines for Working with Interpreters

1. Brief the interpreter

- Identify yourself.
- Provide specific instructions of what needs to be accomplished.

2. Speak directly to the parent(s)

- Communicate directly with the parent as if the interpreter is not present.
- The interpreter will relay the information and then communicate the parent's response directly back to you.

3. Speak naturally, not loudly

- Speak at a normal pace and volume.
- Speak in one or two sentences at a time. Try to avoid breaking up a thought. The interpreter is trying to understand the meaning of what you are saying, so express the entire thought at once if possible.
- Pause after expressing a thought to ensure that the interpreter has enough time to deliver your message.
- If something is unclear, or if you have a long statement, the interpreter will ask you to repeat all or part of what you said, or to clarify your meaning.

4. Ask if the parent understands

- Do not assume that an LEP parent understands you. In some cultures, a person may say "yes" as you explain something, not meaning that they understand you, but rather that they want you to keep talking because they are trying to follow the conversation.
- Keep in mind that a lack of English does not indicate a lack of education.

5. Do not ask the interpreter for their opinion

- The interpreter's job is to convey the meaning of the source language and not allow personal opinion to color the interpretation.
- Do not hold the interpreter responsible for what the parent does/does not say.

6. Everything you say will be interpreted

- Avoid private conversations. Whatever the interpreter hears will be interpreted.
- If you feel that the interpreter has not interpreted everything, confirm s/he has done so.
- Avoid interrupting the interpreter while s/he is interpreting.

7. Avoid jargon or technical terms

- Do not use slang, idioms, acronyms, or DOE specific terms that parents may not understand.
- Clarify unique vocabulary and provide examples to explain a term as needed.



8. Length of interpretation

- When you are working with an interpreter, the conversation can often take twice as long as it would take in English only.
- Many concepts that you express will have no equivalent in other languages, therefore the interpreter may have to describe or paraphrase many of the terms that you use.
- Interpreters will often use more words to interpret what the original speaker says simply because of the grammar and syntax of the target language.

9. Reading scripts

- People often speak faster when reading a script. When you are reading a script, prepared text, or disclosure, slow down to give the interpreter a chance to keep up with you.
- Provide the interpreter with a copy of your script.

10. Culture

- Professional interpreters are familiar with the culture and customs of the LEP parent. During the conversation, the interpreter may identify and clarify a cultural issue of which they may think you are not aware.
- If the interpreter feels that a particular question is culturally inappropriate, s/he might ask you to rephrase the question to help you obtain the information in a more appropriate way.

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