

Working with an Interpreter

Face-to-Face



Why use interpreters?

Language barriers

- Put informed consent and decision-making at risk, undermining the ethical principles of justice, respect for persons, and concern for the welfare of participants.
- Can delay research or result in flawed data, due to the receipt of inaccurate or poorly understood information by researcher or participant.
- Decrease easy access to and awareness of research activities, undermining the principles of fairness and equity in research participation.

Why you should use **qualified** interpreters

The use of unqualified interpreters may invalidate consent

Qualified interpreters need to meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrate proof of language proficiency in the interpreter's working languages
- Have completed specialized professional training that includes ethics, professional skills (e.g., use of first person), and knowledge (e.g., terminology)
- Follow a professional code of ethics and standards of practice
- Pass a professional interpreting skills test
- Abide by the ethical principles of
 - » Accuracy and fidelity
 - » Confidentiality
 - » Impartiality
 - » Respect for persons
 - » Maintaining role boundaries
 - » Accountability
 - » Professionalism
 - » Continued competence

Unqualified interpreters are more likely to:

- Make more errors than qualified interpreters
- Omit pertinent information
- Add information that the participant did not include
- Substitute information
- Condense summaries that omit details
- Breach confidentiality
- Make more errors in explaining medical terminology.

NOTE - never use minors for interpretation

Working with an interpreter

Before the interpretation session

Note - Interpreters should only interpret what has been stated by either researcher or participant. It is generally not professionally acceptable for them to initiate conversation or answer participants' questions on their own.

The researcher must present the information on the English version of the consent form. The interpreter then interprets this information for the participant, in the participant's language. **Interpreters should NOT be asked to sight read**, e.g., to silently read a consent form in one language - and while reading - interpret the content into a second language out loud. This skill requires additional qualifications that many general interpreters do not have.

Note - Even if an interpreter is qualified to sight read, a lengthy or complex informed consent form greatly reduces the likelihood that the participant will be able to retain the information in a way that promotes genuine informed consent, and is therefore a highly discouraged practice.

- Meet a few minutes in advance of the session to brief the interpreter on content and what you wish to accomplish. Always inform the Interpreting Service Provider (agency or interpreter) of any known risks. Provide interpreters with the needed advice, protection and safety measures generally available to participants. The interpreter should never be forced into a situation that poses a risk to their health and well-being.
- Explain any complex or specialized research or medical terms in advance of the session, to ensure the interpreter is able to convey this information in the target language.
- Ask the interpreter to stop and ask for clarification immediately if he or she does not understand what you or the participant said.
- Come to an agreement about how each of you will respond if either feels that the participant is uncomfortable or does not understand something.
- Discuss how you will regulate the pace of the conversation, to prevent the conversation from moving too quickly or slowly. Avoid asking the interpreter for his/her opinion during the session.
- Ensure that the interpreter is appropriate, i.e., speaks the correct language or dialect.
- Arrange the seating to facilitate ease of communication. A triangular arrangement is usually recommended.

Key Definitions

Interpretation - the rendering of spoken or signed communication from one language into another. Interpreters support **bi-directional** conversations - that is, from language 1 into language 2 and from language 2 into language 1.

When the interpreter, researcher, and participant are together in one space, this is referred to as **face-to-face interpretation**.

When an interpreter waits for a speaker to finish an utterance before he or she interprets, this is referred to as **consecutive interpreting** (as opposed to **simultaneous interpreting**).

Consecutive interpreting and simultaneous interpreting require very different skill sets and qualifications.

AVLIC - Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (www.avlic.ca).

Bilingual Person - An individual who has some degree of proficiency in two languages. A high level of bilingualism is the minimum qualification for a competent interpreter **but by itself does not ensure the ability to interpret.**

Did you know?

- When events are encoded in one language, trying to talk about that event in another language may affect recall. The language of a conversation, in other words, may influence the quality and quantity of information elicited.
- 'Abstract' words - such as justice or truth, and 'emotion' words - such as fear or sadness - vary across languages, and vary more than the words used for concrete objects. When abstract concepts are used in a conversation, a person might only be able to give an approximation of what they wish to say if they are not speaking in their first language.
- Language and culture are very closely linked.

During the interpretation session

Note - interpreters are professionally bound to confidentiality.

- Introduce the interpreter and participant(s) to each other, and emphasize that interpreters are professionally bound to confidentiality. Ensure the participant knows you are conducting the session and understands the interpreter's role.
- Confirm with the participant that he or she is comfortable working with the interpreter.

Members of some religious or cultural groups may have a strong preference for an interpreter of the same gender.

Some individuals might prefer not to work with an interpreter from their local community - especially if that community is small or tightly knit - for fear of loss of confidentiality.

Members of some religious or cultural groups will have strong beliefs about acceptable levels of physical closeness to others. Be attentive to how the session is physically arranged, and watch for cues that indicate discomfort.

- Always direct your conversation to the participant, not the interpreter. Explain the purpose of the session, how it will proceed, and allow time for participants' questions or concerns.

Be aware that members of some religious or cultural communities may find direct eye contact disrespectful.

- Use plain language. Avoid technical terms, abbreviations, slang, metaphors, or professional jargon.
- Avoid expressing more than one or two concepts or pieces of information at a time before giving the interpreter time to interpret.
- Regularly pause to ask the participant to 'teach back' or restate what they heard or understood, using their own words.
- Encourage participants to ask questions. Give them ample time to process information.

Finishing the interpretation session

- Debrief the interpreter, especially if the session was emotionally taxing or if the conversation was difficult. Clarify any issues you may have from the session. Ask for the interpreter's feedback about the session's success (pace, clarity, plainness of language used, etc.) Make sure you have this conversation in a private space.
- Record the use (or refusal) of an interpreter on all relevant documents.
- **Informed consent is an ongoing process.** The participants' continuing ability to provide informed consent needs to be considered throughout the study – not just at the time of initial consent. Interpreters should be available at regular intervals to ensure that participants have opportunities to ask questions throughout the research activity.

Key Definitions

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) - LEP refers to a level of English language proficiency that is not sufficient for ensuring equal access to public services without an interpreter. This includes the inability to speak, read, write, or understand English at a level that permits an individual to interact effectively with health care providers or social service agencies.

Remote Interpreting - interpretation provided by an interpreter who is **not** in the presence of the speakers, e.g., he or she is interpreting via telephone or videoconferencing.

In telephone interpreting, the researcher and participant are typically in the same room, although sometimes the three parties (researcher, participant and interpreter) can all be at different sites.

What exactly does nodding or saying "Yes" mean?

Non-verbal aspects of communication may be difficult or even impossible for someone from a different language or cultural group to accurately 'read'. For example, nodding may mean either "yes" or "no" in different cultures. Cross-culturally, nodding or saying "yes" might actually mean any of the following –

- I understand, agree, or approve
- I heard what you said
- I heard, but may or may not agree
- I understand but don't agree
- I see that this is important for you, but I may not agree
- I do not understand, but out of respect to you, I will not let you know that you have explained this poorly
- I agree and will do

Note - Instead of asking questions that require a "yes" or "no" response from participants, ask them to summarize - or teach back to you - what they heard or understood, in their own words.

Booking an Interpreter

Note - You will need to book additional time - beyond that required in a non-interpreted encounter.

Tips

- If the content is medical in nature, request an interpreter with **medical interpreter** qualifications and experience.
- Give the agency providing the interpreter services as much advance notice as possible. This usually means putting your request in more than 48 hours in advance of the session.
- Give the dispatcher details about the interview, especially if you anticipate that sensitive, technical, or complex issues will be covered.

Information you will be asked for by the Interpreting Service Provider

Time and date interpreter is required; expected length of session; participant's name; language of participant; purpose of session; topics; key contact information, and payment details.

To book an interpreter, contact one of the following agencies:

MOSAIC Interpretation Services

Telephone – 604-254-8022

Email – interpretationservices@mosaicbc.com

Online booking – <http://www.mosaicbc.com/mosaic-language-services/translation-and-interpretation/interpretation-0>

Lower Mainland Interpreting Services (LMIS)

Telephone – 604-675-4099; toll-free – 1-877-228-2557

Online booking – <https://plscustomer.phsa.ca/>

Note - an account must be first set up with LMIS. Visit the LMIS website for more information.

Participants who have spoken English for many years may revert back to a language they feel more comfortable with during times of stress, injury, or illness.

For more information, contact:

Diversity Services

diversity@providencehealth.bc.ca

Key Definitions

Sign Language - a visual-spatial language where information is expressed by facial expressions, and through combinations of hand-shapes, palm orientations, movements of the hands, arms and body, located in relation to the body. American Sign Language or (ASL) is the most common sign language used by English signers in Canada, with Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) most commonly used by French-deaf community members. **On October 9, 1997, in a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court of Canada ordered the Government of British Columbia to pay for sign language interpreters when Deaf people access health care services.** *Eldridge v. British Columbia (Attorney General) (1997), 46 CRR (2nd) 189 (SCC). In Dominion Law Reports, 151 D.L.R. (4th).*

Sight Translation - translation of a written document into spoken or signed language. An interpreter reads a document written in one language and simultaneously interprets it (into oral or signed communication) into a second language. **Interpretation and sight translation require different skill sets and qualifications.**

Simultaneous Interpreting - the practice of having the interpreter interpret utterances from one language into another while simultaneously listening to and comprehending the next sentence. This form of interpreting is typically used when communicating with a group of people who share the same language, and do not speak or understand the language of the presenter. Simultaneous interpreting requires use of electronic transmitting and listening equipment and a highly qualified person trained and experienced in simultaneous interpretation.

STIBC - Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia (STIBC) (www.stibc.org).

Teach-Back - the practice of asking participants to repeat or summarize, in their own words, what they need to know or do. This is a test of how well you communicated. It provides a crucial opportunity for you to check for participant understanding, and if necessary, to re-teach your information.

Translation - the rendering of a written text in one language, into a written text in another language. **Interpretation and translation require different skill sets and qualifications.**