

HOW TO WORK WITH INTERPRETERS INFORMATION SHEET

What Interpreters Do:

Professional oral interpreters help communication between patients who are non-English monolingual speaking or limited English proficiency and clinicians who are unable to communicate in the language. Oral language interpreters interpret (face-to-face, video, or telephone) what is said verbally in English and conveys it in the target language and what is spoken in the target language into English.

Professional sign language interpreters help communication between persons who are deaf and persons who are hearing. Sign language interpreters interpret what is said verbally into a manual language and then interprets what the deaf person is signing into spoken English.

Professional interpreters are **neutral and follow a code of ethical behavior**; a major tenant of that code is keeping all information confidential.

Tips for Working with Professional Interpreters:

- ◆ Help the interpreter to prepare for the meeting/session so they understand the purpose and context. If possible, **share intake/assessment questions, acronyms, jargon, and terms in advance.**
- ◆ Oral and sign language interpreters facilitate communication. **Asking them to do other things beyond this role is inappropriate and may inhibit their ability to interpret when needed.**
- ◆ **Interpreters will speak in the first person** (as though they are the client) when communicating.
- ◆ **Look at and speak directly to the patient.** The interpreter is only the means to build a bridge for equitable communication between you and the patient. As an example: **Do** say "What is your drug of choice?". **Do not** say: "Ask her or him what their drug of choice is?".
- ◆ **Allow time for communication to flow back and forth.** In most interpretation situations, the interpreter will begin interpreting as soon as the person is complete. Manage communications so that one person at a time is speaking. When someone is speaking for a long time, it is fine to intervene: "I am going to ask you to pause to give the interpreter a moment to convey your thought."
- ◆ **Simultaneous interpretation may be** used in group settings and involves use of a listening device (provided by the interpreter). The interpreter will listen to what is being said and simultaneously interpret what is said into a device that transmits the information to the patient (who has a similar device). This prevents frequent pauses in conversation and interruptions to the group dynamic.
- ◆ Inform the patient that there are no side conversations with the interpreter. Interpreters interpret everything to those in the room. **Do not ask the interpreter to omit something you said.**
- ◆ Interpreters may ask for clarification in the meaning of statements or terms, particularly if there is no equal meaning in the language or culture, or may ask questions.
- ◆ **Document in the relevant notes** (e.g., progress or miscellaneous) interpretation services were provided.
- ◆ When interpretation is conducted in-person, to increase likelihood of timely arrival, provide the interpreter with directions and parking.