



Tips for Working with a Certified Interpreter

Assure the individual understands the interpreter's role.

The first time an interpreter is utilized, it is important to explain to the individual that the interpreter is there to help facilitate communication, to help them understand what is being said and allow them to fully participate.

Scheduling the meeting.

Please remember that the individual absorbs information visually. Please try to schedule meetings at the individual's best time of day. Also, please be sure to schedule extra time for this meeting. Being short on time leads to ineffective communication in any setting, but when language barriers are involved, it is important to have the time to make sure everyone is understood.

Prior to starting the meeting.

Familiarize the interpreter with essential information like who, what, where, and why. Allow some time before the meeting starts for the interpreter to talk with the individual so that they can become comfortable with their language skills. Team members familiar with the individual may have to support/explain some of the individual's communication techniques as well. If you are using written notes, or speaking from a presentation, it is helpful to offer a copy to the interpreter as well. Please be aware that it may take numerous tries for the individual to accept a new person.

**If the communication is ineffective, please stop the meeting and reschedule using a deaf interpreting team.*

Educate other team members and set ground rules for the meeting.

To ensure best communication between all parties, make sure the team understands the best practices for using an interpreter and set ground rules for communication. Ground rules should include:

- **Speak clearly and in a normal tone.**

Your interpreter may be trained to work at a quick pace, but it is important for clarity and accuracy to speak clearly and slowly. Speaking too rapidly, not pausing, or being unclear may result in information having to be repeated or clarified.

- **Refrain from using metaphors, acronyms, slangs or idioms.**

While the interpreter is knowledgeable of metaphors and slang which are used frequently, such cultural phrases may not translate well into the target language. Use simple yet concise wording that will easily be translatable, making the process of working with an interpreter smooth and productive.

- **Remember to pause between sentences or complete thoughts.**

Try not to interrupt when the interpreter is translating and listen to the entire string interpretation before responding.

- **Speak directly to the non-English speaker, not the interpreter.**

Remember, the interpreter is purely there to interpret for the individual and to provide understanding. Do not use phrases like "tell them I said..." and do not ask the interpreter to not sign some information. The practice of exclusion is unethical and against the interpreter's code of ethics.

- **Permit only one person to speak at a time.**

Make sure that only one person is speaking at a time and avoid interrupting. This can confuse the conversation, and take more time if things are needed to be repeated or re-explained.

