



How to work with an interpreter onsite

Preparation

- check that the interpreter is aware of the nature and overall aim of the session
- if possible, have a pre-session discussion with the interpreter on how to deal with cultural and other issues that may arise during the session.

Session arrangements

- arrange a place for the session in private
- allow for extra time (up to double)
- arrange the seating to allow for easy communication
- the ideal seating arrangement is where all three parties are an equal distance apart (eg. a triangle).

Remember: Interpreter services are provided for the hearing impaired as well as other languages. In Australia, the deaf sign language is called AUSLAN.

The session

- introduce yourself and the person to the interpreter
- make sure that the person knows you are conducting the session and understands the interpreter's role
- stress that both you and the interpreter are bound by a strict code of ethics to maintain confidentiality
- explain the purpose of the session, how it will proceed and allow the person to raise any concerns they may have
- look at the person and speak directly to the person in the first person. For example, say "How can I help you today?" instead of "Ask him/her how I can help"
- speak normally to the person and pause after two or three sentences to allow the interpreter to relay the message
- if the person does not understand, it is your responsibility (not the interpreter's) to explain more simply
- maintain your role in managing the session. The interpreter does not conduct the session
- seek the person's permission if you need to obtain cultural information from the interpreter. If you need to talk to the interpreter directly then the interpreter should explain the nature of the conversation to the person.

For more information, refer to the [Queensland Health Working with Interpreters Guidelines](http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural) on the QHEPS multicultural website qheps.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural

Finishing the session

- check that the person has understood the key messages in your session. Ask if they have any questions
- if the person requires another appointment, make these arrangements with the person while the interpreter is still there
- thank the person and if relevant explain that you may need to have a post-appointment discussion with the interpreter. For example, you may require clarification on a language and/or cultural issue. Say good-bye formally
- debrief the interpreter if the session was emotionally taxing and clarify any question you have from the session
- provide feedback to the Health Service District Interpreter Service Coordinator if required.

DO

- repeat and summarise the major points
- be specific (eg. 'daily' rather than 'frequent')
- use diagrams, pictures and translated written materials to increase understanding
- clarify that you have been understood or that you have understood the person.

DON'T

- use metaphors (eg. like a maze), colloquialisms (eg. pull yourself up by your bootstraps), and idioms (eg. kick the bucket) because such phrases are unlikely to have a direct translation
- use medical terminology unless the interpreter and person are familiar with the equivalent term.

Queensland Health External Interpreter Service Provider:

ONCALL Interpreters & Translators Agency Pty Ltd

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How to work with an interpreter on the phone

Common reasons telephone interpreters are used

- for a pre-arranged appointment (planned situations)
- for reminder calls for health appointments
- at short notice when a person presents at, or telephones the health service
- at short notice when a health service needs to contact a person with limited/no English language proficiency
- for after hours interpreting
- for medical emergencies
- in situations where an onsite interpreter is not available (eg. a rural or remote area).

Information you will need

You will need details about the person, your service area and interpreter requirements, including:

language, cultural requirements (eg. dialect, accent, ethnicity and religion), gender preference, level of specialised training (eg. mental health trained interpreter), appointment type (eg. cardiac, mental health), any notes to convey to the interpreter (eg. bereavement session).

Scenario 1: the person will be present – planned situations

- organise the necessary telephone equipment such as a conference phone, a hands-free phone or a dual handset phone. If these are not available, you will need to share the handset with the person
- request an interpreter through an electronic request form on the Interpreter Service Information System (ISIS). Go to the multicultural website on QHEPS to find out how to register (qheps.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural)
- if ISIS is not available when you need to make a request, fax the Health Service District Interpreter Service Coordinator
- remember to book for the expected duration you require the interpreter (eg. any waiting time plus the appointment time)
- you need to ring the allocated interpreter at the requested time and date (interpreter details will be available in ISIS)
- when the interpreter comes on the line, introduce yourself and the person to the interpreter. Clearly and briefly describe the purpose of the session and your physical location (eg. hospital ward, front counter, private interview room). Advise the interpreter if it is an emergency situation
- proceed with the session using the Communication Tips.

For more information, refer to the [Queensland Health Working with Interpreters Guidelines](http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural) on the QHEPS multicultural website qheps.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural

Scenario 2: the person is present – unplanned situations

- organise the necessary telephone equipment
- phone the Queensland Health External Interpreter Service Provider and request a telephone interpreter. You will need the information shown in the box
- you will be placed on hold while the provider connects you with the interpreter. When the interpreter comes on the line, introduce yourself and proceed as in planned situations.

Scenario 3: the person has phoned you

- identify the language the person speaks and ask for the person's name and phone number so you can phone back
- phone the Queensland Health External Interpreter Service Provider and request a telephone interpreter
- you will be placed on hold while the interpreter is connected. The Queensland Health External Interpreter Service Provider will phone the person and connect the three parties
- when you are connected, introduce yourself and the person to the interpreter. Ask the person the purpose of their phone call. Proceed with the session using the Communication Tips.

Scenario 4: you need to phone the person

- phone the Queensland Health External Interpreter Service Provider and request a telephone interpreter. You will need to have the information shown in the box available
- you will be placed on hold while the interpreter is connected. The Queensland Health External Interpreter Service Provider will phone the person and connect the three parties
- when you are connected, introduce yourself and the person to the interpreter. Clearly and briefly describe the purpose of the session. Proceed with the session using the *Communication Tips*.

Communication tips

- clearly and briefly state the purpose of the session/phone call to the person and the interpreter
- use short sentences in plain English and speak directly to the person (eg. Mr ..., how can I help you?)
- pause after two or three sentences to allow the interpreter to speak
- allow the interpreter to clarify as he/she has no visual cues to assist
- ensure you have covered everything you intended – there will be no chance after the interpreter hangs up
- clearly indicate the end of the session to both the person and the interpreter.

