



# Interpreter services

for Queensland Health funded non-government organisations  
administered through Community Services Unit

## Queensland Health's commitment

Queensland Health recognises the importance for funded non-government organisations (NGOs) to have access to interpreter services to meet the language and communication needs of clients from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

For this reason, Community Services Unit, Queensland Health has implemented arrangements for funded NGOs to access departmentally funded interpreter services.

This will help to ensure people from CALD backgrounds who have difficulty communicating in English have equitable access to services.

This means an interpreter will be provided for free to assist you with your client when your organisation requests and books an interpreter through the **Interpreter Service for Queensland Health funded NGOs**.

## What is an interpreter?

An interpreter is someone who conveys an oral message or statement from one language to another.

## Why is it important to use an interpreter?

The need to understand and be understood is important for effective health care. Poor communication may result in misunderstandings which can be confusing and distressing for clients. Interpreters can assist staff and clients communicate clearly.

## Why is it important to use professional interpreters rather than family or friends?

It is always best to use professional interpreters when important or confidential information is being discussed. At times it may be appropriate to accept offers of language assistance by family members or friends of clients, but only for simple day-to-day communication.

If more complex or confidential information is being discussed, a qualified interpreter should be used. Qualified interpreters are trained and are bound by a code of conduct that requires them to relate information accurately and maintain confidentiality. Family or friends may unintentionally leave out information to protect their relative, or because they feel embarrassed or may not understand the information.

## When should an interpreter be engaged?

It is suggested that you use an interpreter for health related situations where communication with your client is essential or important information is being discussed. This includes for example, admission, assessments, counselling, and development of case management or treatment plans.

## How do I know if my client needs an interpreter?

The following cues may indicate the need for an interpreter.

Your client:

- states they speak little or no English
- requests an interpreter and/or brings an "I need an interpreter" card
- has a proficiency in English which indicates they may not understand medical or complicated terminology.

If you have any doubt, ask a question that requires your client to answer in a sentence rather than 'yes' or 'no'. Consider using the "Language Identification Card" which lists languages commonly encountered. The message underneath each language says: "Please point to your language. We will arrange an interpreter at no charge".

## What languages are available?

Interpreter services are available in all community languages, including Australian Sign language (Auslan). While some languages may not be available immediately, the Queensland Health non-government organisation (QH NGO) Interpreter Service Coordinator will arrange a suitable appointment.

## How will an interpreter be provided?

Interpreters may be provided for telephone or onsite (i.e. in person) interpreting.

- **Telephone** interpreters can be engaged for administrative communication, when a client presents without an appointment, or when an onsite interpreter is not available (e.g. rural or remote locations)
- **Onsite** interpreters may be required for most health related appointments, such as counselling sessions or developing treatment plans.

## How do I request an interpreter through Queensland Health?

You **fax, email or phone** your request for an interpreter service to the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator.

A simple step by step process is provided at the end of this Information Sheet. If you have any questions, contact the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator for assistance.

## When can I contact the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator?

The QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator is available during:

### Business hours:

Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm.

However, you can email or fax your request to the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator at any time if you are making a booking in advance (more than two (2) working days notice).

These planned bookings can be made for appointments during business hours as well as outside business hours (after hours).

While the majority of after hours interpreting is provided by telephone interpreters, onsite interpreting can be requested if required eg. Auslan.

If you need an interpreter immediately or at short notice (within two (2) working days) telephone the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator during business hours for assistance.

## Who do I contact if I need interpreter assistance and I am ringing after hours?

The QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator will not be available to answer requests for assistance if you are contacting the service after hours:

### ■ After hours means:

between 4:30pm to 8:30am Monday to Friday, weekends (Saturday and Sunday) and public holidays.

However, for general health-related enquiries or assistance, telephone **13 HEALTH** on ph: **13 432 584**. This service will arrange a telephone interpreter to assist your client with health information, referral or advice if you are ringing after hours.

If a client presents with a medical emergency, always telephone **000** or go to your nearest hospital Emergency Department for assistance. These services will arrange the necessary medical care and organise an interpreter service as required.

## Can I use another interpreter service rather than Queensland Health?

There will be no costs to your organisation if you book through the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator. Queensland Health has an arrangement with an external interpreter service agency for providing services on behalf of the department. This is why it is important that you contact the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator when requesting an interpreter.

### Important – please note:

- The interpreter request must only be used to assist with direct client activity for service(s) your organisation is funded to deliver under the existing Service Agreement with Community Services Unit, Queensland Health
- To receive departmentally funded interpreter services, you must contact the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator. They will arrange the booking on your behalf
- Ensure your organisation/service has a clear message on your answering machine that states your hours of operation, so that this message can be relayed to any Non-English speaking client that may be calling your organisation after hours
- If your organisation does not have a Service Agreement with Community Services Unit, Queensland Health, you will need to contact your funding body for assistance to meet any costs for interpreter services.

# Steps for requesting an interpreter

## Overview

1

### Request an interpreter

Need for an interpreter is identified  
Planned or unplanned request?

#### Planned Request?

- Complete Request Form
- Fax or email to QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator

#### Unplanned Request?

- **Business hours:**  
Phone QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator
- **After hours:**  
Phone 13 Health
- **Emergencies:**  
Phone 000

2

### Confirm/ Change/ Cancel request

#### Confirm:

QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator will contact you to confirm or make another appointment.

#### You need to Change/Cancel booking:

Contact QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator (at least 24 hrs notice)

3

### Conduct Interpreting Session

Telephone

Onsite

4

### Complete Interpreting Session

Complete and sign Assignment Completion Sheet

Fax or scan/email to  
QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator

# Steps for requesting an interpreter

## 1 Request an interpreter

### Unplanned interpreter service

If a client presents without an appointment (unplanned) and an interpreter is required immediately or at short notice (within two (2) working days):

Ask the following information from the client, if possible:

- Their name
- Information they are seeking
- Which language they require (you may need to refer to the "Language Identification Card" and ask them to point to the language they require)
- Whether they have any preferences (such as gender of interpreter and cultural specific requests).

Next, phone the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator:

- Provide as much detail as possible of the interpreter requirements
- Arrange a conference telephone, or a dual handset telephone. If these are not available, you will need to share the handset with the client
- The QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator will endeavour to arrange a telephone interpreter at short notice, or make a suitable time within 48 hours.

### Planned interpreter service

After you have set and confirmed an appointment date and time with your client:

- Complete the Request Form
- Fax or email the Request Form to the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator.

Remember to book for the expected duration you require the interpreter (e.g. any waiting time plus the appointment time).

## 2 Confirm/change/or cancel the request

### Confirmations

The QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator will:

- Send you a confirmation fax or email within four (4) working days of your organisation making the booking
- Contact you if an interpreter is not available on the requested date/time, suggest options and make alternative arrangements.

### Changing a request/ cancellations

If you have to make any changes or cancellations, you must:

- Phone, fax or email the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator as soon as possible – at least 24 hours notice.

### 3 Conduct the interpreting session

Before the client and interpreter arrive ensure you:

- Provide a quiet area where you can talk in private
- Allow extra time to brief the interpreter first
- Know the topic your client wants to discuss and describe the purpose of the session
- **For telephone interpreting** – arrange a conference telephone, or a dual handset telephone. If these are not available, you will need to share the handset with the client
- **For onsite interpreting** – arrange the seating to allow for easy communication.

**When conducting the interpreting session:**

- Introduce yourself and the client to the interpreter
- Explain the interpreter’s role to the client
- Stress that you are both bound by a strict Code of Ethics to maintain confidentiality
- Explain the purpose of the session, how it will proceed and allow the client to raise any concerns they may have
- If the interpreting session is being conducted onsite, look at the client and speak directly to the client in the first person
- If the interpreting session is being conducted by telephone, explain the equipment and situation (eg: conference phone, shared phone, office space, front counter). Be mindful that the interpreter is unable to see you and your client, so you may need to provide extra information to the interpreter
- Speak normally to the client and pause after two or three sentences to allow the interpreter to relay the message
- Maintain your role in managing the session
- Seek the client’s permission if you need to obtain cultural information from the interpreter
- Clearly identify the end of the session.

#### Future appointments

If the client requires another appointment, ask the interpreter to assist you while they are there. You will still need to arrange and book any future appointments through the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator by completing and sending the Request Form.

#### What happens if the client or interpreter are late or do not arrive?

If the client does not arrive at the arranged time, you can use the booked interpreter to telephone the client, enquire about their non-arrival and make other arrangements (e.g. another appointment time).

If the interpreter does not arrive at the arranged time, contact the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator who will find out why and/or whether the interpreter will arrive late.

The QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator will make alternative arrangements (if required).

#### For more information on how to conduct interpreting sessions refer to the:

- Queensland Health multicultural website at: [www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural/interpreters/QHIS\\_NGO.asp](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural/interpreters/QHIS_NGO.asp)
- QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator

### 4 Complete the interpreting session – sign the paperwork

You will need to complete an **“Assignment Completion Sheet”** to verify services were provided. This will have been sent to you when you made your original booking or will be presented by the interpreter if the session is provided onsite.

Simply fill in the details of the interpreting session on the Assignment Completion Sheet:

- Note the time the session commenced and ended
- Note if an identify badge was worn by the interpreter (if session was conducted onsite)
- Record any reason appointment did not proceed (e.g. if client did not arrive)
- Sign the sheet
- Fax, or scan and email to the QH NGO Interpreter Service Coordinator
- Retain one copy for your service files
- Record details of the interpreter session in any client documentation.

#### Your feedback is welcome

Tell us what you like or how we can improve our services. A feedback form is available on the Queensland Health Interpreter Service website at: [www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural/interpreters/QHIS\\_feedback.asp](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural/interpreters/QHIS_feedback.asp)

