

Tips for Working with Interpreters

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How to Work Successfully with Interpreters in the Healthcare Setting

Facilitating meetings with an interpreter and family or patient is a developed skill.

Access to Healthcare Services

Interpreters provide access to healthcare services for families to be able to:

- Schedule therapy appointments
- Express their concerns
- Understand recommendations made by services providers

Increase Patient Compliance

Patients are more likely to comply with therapist recommendations and home treatment programs when provided in the home language.

Legal Implications

Three examples (out of many) of legislation that indicate the required use of interpreters or other trained bilingual personnel:

- The National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Healthcare from the U.S. department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- The Executive Order 13166, signed by the president in 2000, entitled *Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Language Proficiency*

Tip 1: Direct Your Message to the Patient

- Avoid saying phrases such as “Tell them that....” or “She said that...”
 - Speak directly to the family, as if the interpreter were not present.
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Tip 2: Clearly define roles of attendees and the purpose of the meeting

- Patients are able to direct their questions and comments to the appropriate parties.
 - Clarifying the purpose of the meeting provides families more context and why they are there.
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Tip 3: Use clear and direct language, avoid idioms, and define acronyms professional jargon

- Use simplified sentences
 - Avoid idioms
 - Define acronyms and professional jargon
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Tip 4: Avoid Side Conversations

- Eliminate any side conversations as the interpreter is only capable of interpreting one message at a time
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Tip 5: Seating

- Triangle, horseshoe or circle formations are preferred when using an interpreter
 - When working with a patient who uses American Sign Language, lighting and seating are important factors
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References

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<http://www.asha.org/practice/multicultural/issues/cb/>
