

# working with interpreters

This tip sheet will assist you to effectively plan and conduct a session involving an interpreter.

## 1. Plan the session.

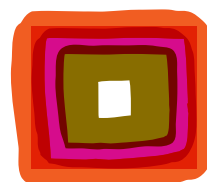
<b>Why</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To ensure that an interpreter can be arranged and that the client is comfortable with the procedure.</li></ul>
<b>How</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Book the interpreter well in advance. Booking an on-site/face-to-face interpreter may require up to two weeks' notice.</li><li>• Provide the client with information on the procedure for using an interpreter prior to the session.</li><li>• Allow extra time for the session.</li><li>• Arrange the seating so that you can maintain eye contact with the client.</li></ul>

## 2. Brief the interpreter before the session.

<b>Why</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To inform the interpreter of what to expect and what is required.</li><li>• The interpreter may not be familiar with the topic and/or terminology.</li></ul>
<b>How</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure booking time includes some extra time for this purpose at the commencement of an appointment.</li><li>• Provide the interpreter with the name of the client, the expected duration and nature of the appointment, and any other relevant information.</li></ul>

## 3. Communicate with the client and through the interpreter.

<b>Why</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An interpreter provides a service to assist you and your client to effectively and accurately communicate and understand each other.</li></ul>
<b>How</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce yourself and the interpreter to the client.</li><li>• Maintain eye contact with the client throughout the session.</li><li>• Speak to the client in the first person.</li><li>• Always speak to the client directly and not the interpreter.</li><li>• Speak clearly and avoid using jargon.</li></ul> <p>Continued overleaf...</p>



#### How (continued)

- Speak in short intervals allowing time for the interpreter to interpret what you have said.
- Do not talk with the interpreter and exclude the client. Everything that is said during the interview must be interpreted.
- Always remember that you are in control of the interview. Interpreters do not control the interview.
- Summarise discussion and provide opportunity for the client to ask questions.

### 4. End the session appropriately.

#### Why

- To ensure that everything either you or the client needed to communicate has been covered, and there is nothing outstanding before the session ends.
- The discussion may have had an emotional impact on the client or the interpreter.

#### How

- Check whether the client is ready to end the session and that there are no further questions.
- Debrief the interpreter if necessary.

### 5. Collect feedback and address concerns.

#### Why

- A worker may have concerns about using a particular interpreter.
- Clients may have concerns about an interpreter or the interpreting process.
- Providing feedback to service providers can improve quality and procedural practice.

#### How

- Develop a centralised feedback system for staff and clients.
- Ensure complaints are documented and kept for future reference.
- Complaints can be referred to the interpreting agency who will use their own follow-up and grievance procedures.
- If the complaint relates to an interpreter from your agency, apply the organisational grievance procedure.
- Workers can raise concerns about an interpreter in a debriefing interview.
- If a worker feels the interpreter's behaviour is interfering with the interview in a detrimental way, the interview can be stopped.
- Ensure that you provide positive feedback when the interpreter's service meets or exceeds your requirements.

### Other tip sheets in this series

[Developing a comprehensive language services response](#)

[Assessing the need for a professional interpreter](#)

[Arranging an interpreter](#)

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