

## Ten Tips for Working with an Interpreter

**1. Being bilingual is not enough to ensure the quality of a medical interpreter.**

Interpreting is a skill and not even being able to speak two languages FLUENTLY can guarantee that professional medical interpreting is what is taking place.

**2. Don't ask medical interpreters to provide word-for-word interpreting.**

Interpreters relay the meaning of the words. A word-for-word interpretation will often lose any meaning whatsoever.

**3. Expect medical interpreters to abide by a Code of Ethics.**

A trained/certified medical interpreter will adhere to confidentiality, accuracy and impartiality.

**4. Don't ask interpreters to be healthcare providers.**

We hope to make your job easier, but we act only as the bridge to communication. We will interpret any message you wish to relay, but we can't be the messenger.

**5. Clarify abbreviations and minimize medical jargon.**

Medical acronyms, etc., will make no sense to the limited-English speaker since medical English is a language unto itself.

**6. Don't ask interpreters NOT to interpret something.**

Part of our Code of Ethics says that we interpret everything that is said, as it is said. If you don't want it repeated, it is best not to say it in front of an interpreter.

**7. Address the patient, not the interpreter, and maintain primary eye contact with your patient.**

The role of the interpreter is essential, but is secondary to your relationship with the patient. Let us help you develop this trust by allowing the interpreter to not take center stage.

**8. Speak at a comfortable pace and pause frequently to allow for the interpretation.**

In order to render a complete interpretation, speak one or two sentences, the interpreter will let you know if you are speaking too fast or too much at once.

**9. Don't ask the patient to bring their own interpreter, don't ask another patient, child, friend or family member to interpret for you.**

Legal obligations make it imperative that qualified language services are utilized in each clinical encounter where the patient/family members and their providers cannot communicate at the same level that two English-speakers would be able to.

**10. Document the use of an interpreter.**

Circumstances may make it impossible to utilize qualified language services in a timely manner. The medical record should reflect when an interpreter was used, who that interpreter was and any obstacles in using an interpreter. Know how to locate an interpreter, either over the phone or in person.