

Quick Guide to Working with Interpreters

in Mental Health Settings

The CLIENT is a consumer, family member or carer engaged with mental health and allied services

Bookings are for 1½ hours so use time to maximum effect!

Match client and interpreter as closely as possible

Have a code word to STOP meeting if needed!

Arrange chairs: interpreter next to worker opposite client

1. Horse shoe for group



2. Triangle for 3 people



3. Circle for large group



Write down names as you hear them

Give interpreter feedback on the meeting and ask for theirs

Remember to acknowledge good work

HOW TO BOOK AN APPROPRIATE INTERPRETER

CHECK CLIENT'S

- ✓ language
- ✓ education and literacy
- ✓ language understood by whole family in family meetings
- ✓ family relationships in terms of status /gender/age
- ✓ ethnicity
- ✓ religion
- ✓ gender preferences
- ✓ migration history/political context
- ✓ and interpreter's background and match as closely as possible

CHECK THE INTERPRETER

- ✓ and client do not know each other socially
- ✓ is a professional (NAATI L3) interpreter with mental health experience
 - remember that in emerging languages one or both of these may not be possible and more thorough briefing is required

MAKE SURE

- ✓ you allow enough time: 5-15mins for briefing and review and 1 hr for meeting (1½ hours)
- ✓ the interpreter and client and/or family are not waiting for you together
- ✓ an appropriate meeting room is booked

BEFORE THE MEETING ALLOW 5-15 MINUTES TO BRIEF THE INTERPRETER ABOUT

- ✓ introductions and the purpose of the meeting
- ✓ who will be present
- ✓ requesting general cultural information – remember this is subjective
- ✓ that you expect everything that is said in the room to be interpreted
- ✓ the mode of interpreting required
- ✓ some words that are not directly translatable from English and may need a few words to convey equivalent meaning
- ✓ seeking clarification from you if they don't understand something
- ✓ possible safety issues
- ✓ a code word to stop the meeting if you or they are concerned
- ✓ meeting you in a nominated place for a review after the meeting

DURING THE MEETING

- ✓ arrange chairs according to group size
- ✓ keep control of meeting
- ✓ speak directly to the clients
- ✓ ask them how they would like to be addressed - Mr or Mrs or by first name
- ✓ pronounce names correctly – write them down as you hear them to assist you
- ✓ introduce everyone and explain roles
- ✓ explain: "everything said between us here today will be interpreted"
- ✓ reassure clients that interpreter *must not* discuss the case outside the room
- ✓ use short sentences
- ✓ allow the interpreter enough time to interpret
- ✓ check for understanding
- ✓ avoid jargon, sarcasm
- ✓ close the meeting

AFTER THE MEETING ALLOW 5 - 15 MINUTES FOR A REVIEW WITH THE INTERPRETER

- ✓ give feedback about how the meeting went
- ✓ don't overlook good experiences
- ✓ ask interpreter for comments or concerns
- ✓ check for any questions about meaning
- ✓ do not ask the interpreter to interpret symptoms; seek secondary consultation
- ✓ discuss any safety issues

For further detail refer to VTPU Guidelines for Working Effectively with Interpreters in Mental Health Settings 2006

Available at: www.vtputp.org.au or email vtputp@svhm.org.au

This project was funded by the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs and supported by Mental Health Branch, Department of Human Services, Victoria.

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