



‘How to Work Effectively With Interpreters’ Workshop

ESSENTIAL GUIDELINES FOR WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH INTERPRETERS

Before the meeting

- Make sure that you are working with a qualified interpreter and not a family member or friend.
- Brief the interpreter on what to expect in the meeting, where necessary.
- Plan enough time – it may take longer than an English-only appointment.

During the meeting

- Expect and encourage the interpreter to enter and leave the room when you do, rather than staying alone with the patient. (this can have dire consequences for boundaries, the patient will ask questions or tell)
- Remember that the interpreter is required to interpret everything said in the room – curse words, side conversations, and ‘irrelevant’ or repetitive comments included. (If the patient has a side conversation, that should be included, if the patient uses curse words that should be included, the interpreter is not using words that should be filtered out)
- Face the patient and talk to them directly, as if you both spoke the same language.
- Don’t speak too fast. Pause after each complete thought and/or when the interpreter signals to you to allow for the interpretation.
- Ask only one question at a time. Don’t ‘chain’ your questions.(so you know the yes or no is with the right question
- Confirm understanding by asking the patient to repeat key information back to you.

- Be aware of the education level and/or health literacy of your patient in order to phrase your message at an appropriate level. Avoid using acronyms and idioms.
- You are communicating THROUGH the interpreter but TO the client. Dealing with cultural differences and the personality of the patient is primarily your job, not the interpreter's. Some examples of things to keep in mind regarding cultural and linguistic differences:
 - There may be less eye contact with the patient than you customarily expect;
 - A smile or nod on the part of the patient may *not* indicate total agreement.
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After the meeting

- Debrief with the interpreter about the communication process. (seeing if there was anything that impeded communication –next time – in the