

## 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 nor 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 the interpreter to enter and leave the room when you do, rather than staying alone with the patient or client.
- Remember that the interpreter is required to interpret everything said in the room – curse words, side conversations, and ‘irrelevant’ or repetitive comments included.
- Face the patient/client and speak 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’ questions.
- Confirm understanding by asking the patient/client to repeat key information back to you.
- Be aware of the education level and/or health literacy of your client/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/patient. Dealing with cultural differences and the personality of the client/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 client than you customarily expect.
  - A smile or nod on the part of the patient may not indicate total agreement.

Source: UMTIA (Upper Midwest Translators & Interpreters Association) Website