



A GUIDE TO WORKING WITH INTERPRETERS

An interpreter converts communication from one language to another. The goal of the interpreter is to convey the speaker's message as directly as possible. **Interpreters** work in spoken or sign language, **translators** in written language.

- ⦿ *Expect the interpreter to interpret everything that is said as precisely as possible, adding nothing, omitting nothing, and changing nothing.*
- ⦿ *Always use a trained interpreter. Family members or friends should not be used except in the case of an absolute emergency.*
- ⦿ *Ensure that the correct dialect and/or the correct language is being used. A phone interpretation service can assist with this.*
- ⦿ *Address your patient directly, not the interpreter. For example ask, "How are you today?" rather than, "Ask her how she is today."*
- ⦿ *Speak slowly and clearly, pause frequently, and use short sentences.*
- ⦿ *Ask one question at a time.*
- ⦿ *Use plain English; avoid technical terms, idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms, acronyms, and slang.*
- ⦿ *Be prepared to explain some things in more detail for the interpreter. Some terminology and concepts may not have an equivalent in the client's primary language.*
- ⦿ *Do not "think out loud" or ask the interpreter not to interpret something that you have said in the patient's presence.*
- ⦿ *Do not engage the interpreter in personal or side conversations.*

Additional Information for Telephone Interpretation Lines

- ⦿ *Minimize background noise (shuffling of papers, etc.)*
- ⦿ *Speak and enunciate clearly.*
- ⦿ *If you are initiating the call, immediately introduce yourself to the client and explain your reason for calling.*

- ⦿ *The interpreter may need to interrupt to request clarification since there is no opportunity to use body language to assist in the interpreting.*
- ⦿ *If the connection is bad, do not hesitate to re-try the call.*
- ⦿ *If possible, add the interpretation phone line number to speed dial on your phone.*

Courtesy of the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program and Open Door Clinic

Local Resources:

The Community Health Centers of Burlington. The Community Health Centers of Burlington (CHCB) has gained great knowledge about interpreter services in its years working with refugee and immigrant populations. Contact the CHCB for information about what services they work with and recommend, and to discuss what issues have come up in the past and how they were able to solve them. (802)864-6309
www.chcb.org/

Vermont Interpreter Referral Service. The Vermont Interpreter Referral Service (VIRS) provides interpreter services for deaf and hard of hearing patients in a variety of settings, including medical. They also offer Computer Aided Realtime Translation services (CART), which allows deaf and hard of hearing patients to read dialogue from a computer screen as the conversation takes place. (802)254-3920 or toll free (800)639-1519
www.virs.org

Vermont Interpreting and Translating Services. The Vermont Interpreting and Translating Service, located in Colchester, Vermont, is part of the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program (VRRP) and provides professional interpretation and translation. (802)654-1706 or (802)655-1963
<http://www.vrrp.org/translation.html>

Association of Africans Living in Vermont. The Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV), located in Burlington, Vermont, provides professional interpretation and translation as part of its AALV Interpret Program. (802)355-0795 or (802)985-3106
<http://www.africansinvermont.org/interpret/>

Addison County Language Services (LLC).