WORKING WITH AN INTERPRETER: BEST PRACTICES

The interpreter's role in victim service interpreting is a very simple one: to give authentic voice through accurate interpreting without undermining survivor autonomy or taking over the provider's responsibilities. Interpreting is not a personal relationship but a professional service. A professional interpreter knows that basic protocols are tools. They make the work easier and more transparent.

<u>Pre-Session</u>

- Avoid a situation where the interpreter is sitting in the waiting room with the client
    - DO NOT leave interpreter alone with the client
    - DO NOT ask the interpreter to prep client independently
- Ask the interpreter to arrive 10-15 minutes prior to the assignment for a pre-session conference—if this is not possible consider calling the interpreter prior to the assignment
    - Give the interpreter a general idea about the session for context
    - Discuss questions, potential problems and general approach for session
    - Interpreter's signal that the interpreter needs to take a break
    - Determine the optimal seating arrangement
        - Interpreter will/should adopt the safest, most appropriate position that is unobtrusive and promotes direct provider-survivor communication
            - A triangular configuration with the interpreter equidistant from client and or having the interpreter "sit on the clients shoulder" are two feasible options
        - Check in with the client when they arrive to ensure they are comfortable with the seating arrangement
- Review forms and documents to be used in session
    - DO NOT Ask the interpreter to summarize a document for the client
    - DO NOT Ask the interpreter to entirely sight translate a very lengthy document
        - Lengthy documents should be translated, using the bank, prior to the appointment

<u>During the Session</u>

- Allow extra time for the session — up to double the standard time
- Allow the interpreter to give his or her introduction
- Explain the interpreter's role – highlight the connection between you, the provider, and the survivor
    - This helps keep the session on track so that everyone is focused on what is being communicated and not on the interpreter.
- Review confidentiality with the client
- Expect note-taking, use of dictionary, and breaks
    - Notify client that confidentiality will be maintained and notes will be destroyed after the session
- Encourage client to ask questions or raise concerns

- Ensure language compatibility between interpreter and client
    - Check language compatibility by facilitating a general conversation with client using the interpreter before starting the actual meeting. Check for client understanding by asking questions and or asking that they repeat what you said
- Speak directly to the client in first person and maintain eye contact with client (if culturally appropriate)
    - DO NOT use indirect speech (e.g. "Ask her where she lives")
    - Unless:
        - The client is a very young child, elderly, disoriented, or mentally ill and could get confused by first person
        - The situation is an emergency or chaotic situation where the interpreter has no choice but to summarize
        - Cases where multiple parties speak at once and the interpreter must clarify who is speaking
- The interpreter will and *should* interpret *everything* even if one of the parties requests that something not be interpreted
- Check regularly for client understanding – do not rely on a "yes" or nod – ask for information to be repeated back. It is your job as the provider to ensure the client understands not the interpreter's
    - DO NOT Ask the interpreter about client's veracity or mental state
    - DO NOT Ask interpreter's opinion about the case or client
- Expect linguistic mediation to clarify linguistic barriers
    - Explain in advance that they may occur
    - DO NOT Ask the interpreter general questions about client's culture they are not cultural experts
- Ask one question at a time – a second question may be ignored

<u>Post-Session</u>

- <u>Debrief</u>
    - Thank the interpreter for the role that he or she played in the session
    - Touch base with interpreter on any patterns of speech that arose (stutter, dialect, long pauses)
    - Allow interpreter to discuss aspects that were confusing or distressing
    - Share supportive service referrals with the interpreter, as appropriate
    - Reiterate confidentiality and destroy interpreters notes
- <u>Repeat Sessions</u>
    - If you will be meeting with the client on several occasions, you may want to check with the client to ensure that the client is comfortable with the interpreter
        - Use LanguageLine to call client with a different interpreter to ensure that working repeatedly with the same in-person interpreter is alright