

# FACT SHEET: WORKING WITH INTERPRETERS



## When to use an accredited interpreter

It is essential that accredited interpreters are used at any point when a person from a Non English Speaking Background (NESB) requests an interpreter, or at the initiative of a staff member when:

- Providing information that is necessary for decision making;
- Conducting assessments;
- Conveying sensitive information about a person's needs or supports;
- The client appears to be stressed or anxious.

Professional interpreters should always be used in preference to family, friends, community members or bilingual staff. Family and friends may not have sufficient language skills to interpret complex information, are emotionally involved in the situation, and are not bound by the same standards as a professional interpreter. Using unqualified interpreter opens up your service to potential risks associated with misinterpreted information.

## National Interpreter Symbol



The national interpreter symbol indicates to people from NESBs that they can ask for an interpreter at your service. Consider displaying this symbol in your reception area.

## Preparing for the session

- Ask the client for their preferred language and never make assumptions about what language the client speaks.
- Always allow additional time when working with an interpreter.
- Be aware of the client's privacy when arranging an interpreter – for small community groups in the Illawarra Shoalhaven, an interpreter may also be a person's friend or acquaintance. Consider offering to use a telephone interpreter and keep the client's name confidential.



## DURING THE SESSION

- Acknowledge and introduce the interpreter at the start of the session.
- Where possible, provide the interpreter with some context for the conversation to ensure the information is appropriately interpreted.
- Speak directly to the client, not to the interpreter.
- If working with an on-site interpreter, arrange yourselves in a triangle with you positioned directly opposite the client and the interpreter to the side of you both.
- Keep statements short and avoid jargon.

## AVAILABLE SERVICES

### Telephone Interpreting Services (TIS) National:

TIS National provides a telephone interpreting service as well on-site interpreters. The service is available 24/7 and has a pool of interpreters speaking over 160 community languages. You can access an interpreter on the spot by calling 131 450, or you can pre-book an interpreter – this is recommended when you require a less common community language, or have special or complex requirements.

The following groups are eligible for fee-waivers when accessing TIS

- Non-profit, non-government organisations for approved casework and emergency services where the organisation does not receive substantial government funding.
- Licensed real estate agencies to discuss private residential property matters.
- General practitioners, medical specialists and pharmacists when dispensing PBS medications.
- NDIS service providers when implementing funded supports in a client's NDIS plan.
- Service providers delivering Home Care Packages, Commonwealth Home Support Packages, and Residential Aged Care services.

Any other organisation receiving government funding should discuss access to interpreters with their government funding body.

### Multicultural NSW Interpreting Services

Multicultural NSW provides on-site interpreting in a range of community languages and are available for booking 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Multicultural NSW has scope to provide fee waivers for some non-profit organisations working with people from NESBs at its own discretion. Organisations will need to contact Multicultural NSW Language Services on 02 8255-6737 to register for fee-waivers, and will need to request a waiver each time an interpreter is required.

Bookings can be made with Multicultural NSW by calling 1300 651 500 or by emailing [languageservices@multicultural.nsw.gov.au](mailto:languageservices@multicultural.nsw.gov.au).

### Wollongong Council Interpreting Services

Wollongong City Council provides on-site interpreters for public, community and private sector agencies in a fee for service capacity. Interpreters may be used for meetings, client assessments or events. The council has NAATI-qualified interpreters and language support workers speaking 32 community languages. Bookings can be made by contacting council on (02) 4227 7650 or by sending an email to [interpreters@wollongong.nsw.gov.au](mailto:interpreters@wollongong.nsw.gov.au).

### Health Care Interpreter Service

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Health Care Interpreting Services provides interpreting for patients from NESBs. The service provides on-site interpreters, telephone interpreting and videoconferencing. It is essential that qualified health care interpreters are used when discussing any health related information as they have received specific training in interpreting medical terminology. Bookings are made by health care professionals for specific appointments. Community service professionals can contact the Health Care Interpreter Service on (02) 4223 8540 to discuss necessary support for their client.