

Tip Sheet 2 - Working with Interpreters

Introduction

When working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, you may need to use an interpreter. Below are some tips for getting the most out of your assessment when working with interpreters.

Booking an interpreter



- Confirm if there is a specific language or dialect required with the client (this might include asking what region of a country a client is from) to avoid miscommunication.
- Consider religious, cultural or political issues and any gender preferences of the client.
- Request a Level 3 Professional Interpreter (preferably with mental health experience for dementia assessments) who is NAATI accredited.

Access to interpreters

- If you live in a rural area, you may choose to book an interpreter for a day and undertake all assessments of that language group on the same day.
- For a preliminary assessment, consider using a telephone interpreter if an interpreter is not available to come out.

How to work with an interpreter



- Brief the interpreter before the session with the client. Identify what you would like to get out of the session and talk about culturally relevant issues that might arise. Mode of interpreting and seating position may also be discussed here.
- Clarify terms that will be used during the assessment such as dementia and depression with the interpreter.
- De-brief the interpreter after the session; discuss any issues that arose and how they might be dealt with in future.
- Explain the role of the interpreter to the client.
- Make sure the client is aware that the assessment is completely confidential, and that the interpreter must also maintain confidentiality.
- Direct conversation towards the client, not the interpreter.
- Use non-technical language.
- Use short sentences and allow time for the interpreter to relay what you have just said.
- At the end of the assessment summarise the key points.
- Make sure the client is clear on any issues that need following up.

(Source- refer reference list below).



Things to be aware of

- Allow additional time for assessments.
- Do not use family members to interpret. They may have a conflict of interest. Family members are also not bound by the same confidentiality codes as a professional interpreter. Family members have an important role in supporting and advocating for the client.
- There is not always a direct translation from English into another language; concepts as well as words may need to be explained.
- Check client's literacy and hearing: make sure client's use hearing aids if required.
- Use a translated tool if available.

Do not leave the interpreter alone with the client. This is for safety and to help interpreters remain impartial.



What do I do if a client refuses an interpreter?

Using interpreters allows family members to fulfil their role as “family” by providing support or information as required instead of thinking about interpreting concepts and giving themselves time to think about their own questions.

Clients have the right to refuse an interpreter, try to explain the benefits of an interpreter, but you must accept their final decision. Please note the decision in the case notes.

Reluctance to use an interpreter may be due to stigma surrounding various medical conditions or knowing the interpreter (particularly in small communities).

- Suggest using a telephone interpreter if the client is from a small community and has concerns about confidentiality.
- You might also suggest that the interpreter is as much for your benefit as the client and will ensure you understand all the issues for the client.

Further information and References

Services

Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT)
www.ausit.org



National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI):
www.naati.com.au

Translating and Interpreting Service (telephone interpreting) –
www.immi.gov.au/tis

Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit:
<http://www.vtpu.org.au/>

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