

## BEST PRACTICES IN TELEPHONIC INTERPRETING

- 1 Allow the interpreter the time to introduce themselves and to collect the information** – in the beginning of the call certain information must be collected for billing and reporting purposes. The interpreter also needs to introduce him or herself to the Limited English Proficient speaker and to you. Please allow a few seconds to take care of these steps, or the interpreter won't be able to proceed. In the beginning of the session along with the introduction, interpreter also conducts a brief pre-session in both languages, for both parties. The pre-session will include the language on confidentiality, accuracy and role boundaries as per Interpreters Code of Ethics.
- 2 Accuracy and completeness** – according to the Code of Ethics interpreters render the message completely and accurately. That means any side conversation will be interpreted.
- 3 Speed** – don't slow down or break up your sentences when working with an interpreter. On the other hand, do not speak or read too fast, otherwise the interpreter will have challenges with rendering the message correctly.
- 4 Flow of interpreting** – the interpreter has to render a message into another language faithfully, without filtering, changing, omitting or adding anything. Therefore, please **talk in manageable segments, use short and clear sentences, and indicate when your message is completed**, so the interpreter can start interpreting. The interpreter uses his/her skills, memory, and concentration to retain and accurately transmit your message. In a course of interpretation make sure to refrain from interrupting the interpreter with additional information, as it might affect the quality of interpretation. Another challenge is that in stressful situations some speakers tend to talk incoherently, use incomplete sentences, provide conflicting messages, be redundant, and talk in lengthy segments without pausing. It makes an interpreter's job much more difficult! In such cases, your interpreter will need to ask for a clarification or repetition.
- 5 Preserving Clarity** – please remember to address **the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) speaker directly**, the way you would talk to an English speaker. The interpreter will use the same grammatical person, as you do.  
Example: **Correct:** "Sir, how are you right now?"  
**Incorrect:** "Interpreter, ask him how he is right now."  
Sometimes, to preserve the clarity, the interpreter may use a quotation mark technique: "The LEP speaker said the following: "I twisted my ankle playing soccer three days ago and since then my foot remains swollen."
- 6 If the interpreter needs to talk on his/her own behalf, he/she uses a third person** – "Madam, the interpreter could not hear your statement clearly. Could you, please, repeat the last sentence for the interpreter?" The interpreter is obligated to maintain transparency, which means he/she should inform the participants of the dialogue that took place in the language they cannot understand. The interpreter cannot be involved in a lengthy conversation with either party and then render only a summary of the discussion. If you need to address the interpreter, and not the LEP speaker, indicate it clearly.  
Example: "Interpreter, could you please spell out the name of the street?"
- 7 Proper names** – Dealing with proper names, such as street names and personal names, can be challenging on the phone, especially for LEP people. But if you need to know the names of the locations, medications, and any other proper names, it is a serious matter. Often, the LEP patient may mispronounce the name, or be unable to spell it in English. It may take some time and patience from both you and the interpreter to determine the necessary information.
- 8 Check for understanding** – in some cultures people will nod or otherwise seem to be in agreement. However, it could either be a gesture of politeness or to support the conversation flow. Please check back for understanding while keeping in mind that lack of proficiency in English doesn't mean lack of education.
- 9 Closing the call** – please let the interpreter know when you don't need his or her services any longer and remember to thank them.

Thank you so much for reviewing these best practices. Please contact us with any questions via email or phone!