Western Australian Language Services Policy 2014

Information Sheet

Working with an interpreter on-site

FINDING AN INTERPRETER

The Department of Finance has developed a Common Use Arrangement (CUA) for Interpreting and Translating Services, CUAITS2012, to provide services to Western Australian Government agencies, Public Benevolent Institutions and other users approved by the State Supply Commission. Agencies and approved users may ‘pick and buy’ from the contractors on the CUA.

The CUA covers three categories:

• Culturally and linguistically diverse languages
• Indigenous Australian languages
• Auslan (Australian Sign Language).

Further information and an order form can be obtained from the Department of Finance Contracts WA website at http://www.contractswa.finance.wa.gov.au.

Agencies are strongly encouraged to use the CUA, however, where not practical or reasonable for operational purposes, agencies may buy off-contract. In this case, accredited interpreters can be found using the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) Online Directory of credentialed practitioners of interpreting and translating which is available at www.naati.com.au. Professional associations also maintain online directories available at www.ausit.org or www.waiti.org.au. You could also contact the Independent Practising Interpreters Association (IPIA) at http://ipiawa.wordpress.com.

Professional interpreting and translating services are also listed in the Yellow Pages. Note that commitment to a professional, accurate and quality service is best assured through working with tertiary qualified and/or NAATI certified interpreters.

BEFORE CONTACTING THE INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATING SERVICE

The nature of the situation will impact on the desired level of qualification or credential. Complex situations, which may have serious implications for the person and the public sector agency, should be undertaken by the most qualified interpreter available.

In most cases, the interpreting and translating service will be in a position to assess the qualification or credential level required for a particular situation. It is therefore critical that as much information as possible about the assignment is provided when requesting an interpreter. The following are some points to consider. The CUA Buyers Guide includes an appropriate order form. See www.contractswa.finance.wa.gov.au.

SITUATION

• Subject matter and purpose of the event.
• Domain—for example, community, business, diplomatic.
• Setting—such as health, law, education (be as specific as possible; for example, if it is a health setting, whether it is an emergency department, operating room or home visit).
• Type of event—for example, interview, meeting, court appearance, conference:
  • for court requests, a list of all parties involved in the case will assist an interpreter to determine whether to accept or reject the assignment to avoid cultural conflict
• for medical or legal cases, specific details about the case will assist an interpreter to determine whether to accept or reject an assignment, based on the sex of the patient/client and cultural appropriateness of the subject matter.

• Length and nature of the assignment in case, for occupational health and safety reasons, more than one interpreter is needed.

CLIENT
• Number of people requiring interpreting services.
• Client/s community/ies.
• Language/s spoken, including any regional variation. It may be important to identify the country of birth. For example, Arabic spoken in Somalia or Sudan will be different from Arabic spoken in Iraq or Lebanon.
• Client/s preferred interpreter/s.
• Cultural, religious and/or gender issues.
• Age of client/s.
• If the client is Indigenous, their skin group.

LOCATION
• Correct address for the assignment (and map/details if required).
• Available parking.

TECHNICAL/ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS
• Mode of interpreting (consecutive or simultaneous).
• Special needs (for example, appropriate seating of interpreters and clients/participants or technical requirements such as microphones).
• Your agency’s reference/cost centre/order or client number (if relevant).

Your agency may have guidelines about booking procedures, a preferred interpreter provider or an in-house interpreter service. Follow these guidelines when making a booking.

What to consider when requesting an interpreter:
• Give as much notice as possible
• Provide the interpreting and translating service with as much information as possible about the situation, the client, the location of the event and any technical requirements
• Request the same interpreter where continuity and client confidentiality is important
• Provide relevant documents where appropriate.

BEFORE THE SESSION
• Allow sufficient time for the session—generally, double the amount of time you would require if not engaging an interpreter.
• Before the session, brief the interpreter so that they are aware of the aim and nature of the session and anything specific that may arise.
• If the session is expected to be lengthy or involve complex matters, provide any relevant written material before the session so that the interpreter can be adequately prepared.
• If the assignment is expected to be lengthy, regular breaks should be negotiated beforehand. It may be necessary to have two or more interpreters working in tandem. It is best to check with the interpreting and translating service.
Consider whether the nature of the interview makes it important for the client and interpreter to be separated if required to wait before a session.

**SETTING UP**

For spoken languages, an interpreter should be positioned in front of you and the client. It is preferable to use a triangle arrangement, as below.

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Client       Interpreter       You
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For Auslan interpreters, the interpreter should be seated beside you so that the client can see both you and the interpreter.

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Client       Auslan Interpreter       You
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For Deaf Relay Interpreters, the following seating arrangement should be used:

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Client       Deaf Relay Interpreter       You
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**DURING THE SESSION**

- If the client(s) has not used an interpreter before, begin by explaining the role of the interpreter and how the session will be conducted.
- Stress that the interpreter’s role is only to convey information and that they must adhere to strict confidentiality requirements. Face the client and not the interpreter.
- Avoid speaking to the interpreter and excluding the client(s). Direct all questions to the client(s) and not to the interpreter. For example, say: ‘How can I help you?’ not ‘How can I help him/her?’
- Be helpful to the interpreter—for example, some terms may be difficult to interpret and may need clarification.
- Use simple language and avoid using colloquialisms, idioms, technical language and acronyms.
- Give the client(s) an opportunity to provide feedback to ensure that the pace is appropriate and that the interpreter or client(s) can seek clarification if necessary.
- Give adequate time to the interpreter: speak in short, concise sentences.

A client has the right to refuse an interpreter that has been arranged for them. For this reason, if possible, advise the client in advance of the name of the interpreter who has been engaged.
Family and friends have the right to be present in an interview to provide support to the client. However, they must not interfere with the interpreting and should speak only to the client. They must not ask questions of the interpreter after the interview.

• Provide frequent pauses between sentences—give three or four sentences at a time to enable the interpreter to adequately remember, convey and interpret what was said. Provide regular breaks in the session—it is recommended that breaks are offered every 15–25 minutes for Auslan interpreters and every 20 minutes for others. Ensure that everything that is said during the interview is interpreted, even if it seems unimportant or irrelevant.
• Be conscious of how well the session is going. If at any time you or your client are not satisfied with the interpreter, it is better to end the meeting.

For Indigenous clients, make allowances for cultural differences.

For example:
• direct eye contact can be intimidating and be considered rude or aggressive
• a female client will usually prefer a female interpreter
• relationships between Indigenous people may determine certain behaviours. For example, some relatives cannot look at or talk to each other. It is important that you tell the prospective interpreter or agency the name of the client so that inappropriate or difficult situations do not develop. This is also the reason for asking the client’s skin group before booking an interpreter.

COMPLETING THE SESSION
• Check that the client has understood the key information.
• Provide time for questions.
• It is not recommended that a client and an interpreter leave the meeting at the same time as this may impact on the appropriate professional distance between the interpreter and client.
• Debrief the interpreter/s after the session and clarify any questions you may have, but not to ascertain further information about the client.

For further information contact the Office of Multicultural Interests on 6552 1607 or email harmony@omi.wa.gov.au