



Western Australian Language Services Policy 2020

Types and modes of interpreting

Face-to-face (onsite) interpreting

Onsite interpreting occurs when an interpreter attends in person and should generally be used in situations where complex, sensitive or lengthy matters need to be discussed.

Onsite interpreters offer a face-to-face service by facilitating both non-verbal and verbal communication. This can provide a broader understanding of the information than telephone interpreting, where the interpreter cannot see either the client or staff member. Note, however, that caution needs to be exercised to ensure no miscommunication occurs because of cultural misunderstandings of non-verbal cues (such as direct eye contact).

What are modes of onsite interpreting?

Modes of interpreting are different ways in which an interpreter transfers, and delivers, messages from one language into another as appropriate for the circumstances [situation] and the environment [setting] in which interpreting is taking place.

Modes of interpreting include:

- **Consecutive interpreting**—when the interpreter transfers the original message after the speaker or signer pauses. This is the most commonly used mode of interpreting in spoken languages
- **Simultaneous interpreting**—when the interpreter transfers a message while the speaker continues to speak or sign

- **Multidirectional interpretation**—in which two or more languages are interpreted and where the interpreter may relay messages back and forth between more than two languages, for example, where an interpreter can speak three languages and three individuals require interpretation in each of their languages
- **Unidirectional interpretation**—where an interpreter conveys a message from one language to another only. This may occur where information is being conveyed to an audience
- **Sight translating**—involves the oral translation of a text, that is reading text in one language then relaying the message orally in another language. Note that sight translation should not be used for legal, lengthy or linguistically complex texts
- **Deaf interpreting**—involves the use of a range of communication skills and knowledge to address complex situations and the needs of particular client groups (e.g. a person may be both Deaf and blind)
- **Relay interpreting**—where one language is interpreted into a second language, and the second language is the basis of an interpretation into a third language (Standard English speaker to Standard English/Kriol interpreter to Kriol/Jaru interpreter to Jaru speaker and vice-versa).



A Deaf interpreter is an interpreter who is Deaf or hard of hearing and fluent in Auslan. The Deaf interpreter usually works with an Auslan interpreter. The Auslan interpreter works between Standard Australian English (Standard English) and Auslan, and the Deaf interpreter bridges the gap between Auslan and the Deaf client's communication style as needed. In very challenging situations, the Deaf interpreter and Auslan interpreter may work together to understand a Deaf person's message, conferring with each other to arrive at the best interpretation, before the Auslan interpreter translates the message into Standard English.

Deaf interpreters may also be required for Deaf people who are not fluent in Auslan (for example, due to educational or linguistic disadvantage, intellectual disability, recent migration to Australia or deafblindness).

A Deaf interpreter is highly recommended in situations where misunderstandings can result in especially serious outcomes. For example, a Deaf interpreter should be used in legal situations, by the police when interviewing victims, witnesses or suspects who are Deaf; or in mental health settings where clear and accurate communication assists professionals in determining correct medication or other interventions. Child protection workers may need to use a Deaf interpreter to ensure communication is as effective as possible.

See seating set-up in the information sheet titled *How to engage interpreting services*.

Telephone interpreting

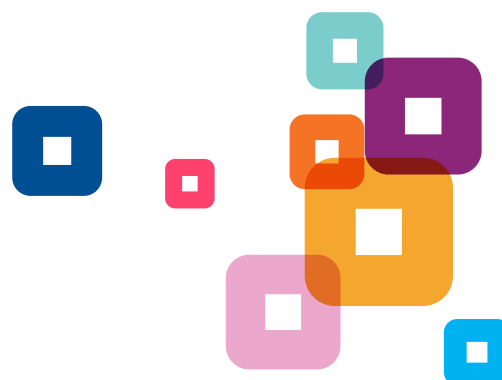
Telephone interpreting is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and is particularly useful in emergency situations when immediate assistance is needed. It may be less expensive and more anonymous than onsite interpreting and can provide access to a wider pool of interpreters. It is useful in remote or regional areas.

Telephone interpreters can be used to establish the language spoken and the nature of an enquiry before an onsite interpreter is engaged. Telephone interpreting can be pre-booked and **minimum charges and cancellation fees apply**.

Telephone interpreting is not suitable for interviews of a sensitive or complex nature, such as mental health or legal matters. Some clients, such as older people, may not be comfortable using the telephone for interpreting.

Telephone interpreting also does not allow for non-verbal signals.

It is not suitable when forms need to be completed. It is also not suitable for Auslan users or people who are hard of hearing. In these instances, agencies can make use of TTY, a teletype system over a phone-line appliance where the message is not spoken, but typed, and appears in type when received.



Video conferencing

Video conferencing is an alternative for when onsite interpreting is not available. It is useful in rural and regional locations when it is difficult to access onsite interpreting services or meet the associated travel costs.

Video conference interpreting uses an interpreter to deliver a service through video link. This enables large groups of people to take part in a discussion and can be organised at short notice where the necessary facilities are available.

Video conferencing technology is available in many locations including through the Western Australian **Community Resource Centres** network, hospitals, registered training organisations, local governments and courts.

Considerations include:

- some people may not have the knowledge or confidence to use the required technology
- not all agencies may have access to videoconferencing facilities
- additional telecommunications costs
- possible confusion for mental health patients
- challenges for both the interpreter and participants in relation to:
 - quality of sound and vision
 - reliability of the communication link
 - vision being blocked by movement.

Video calling

Video calling allows users to communicate with peers by voice using a microphone, video (webcam) and instant messaging over the internet. It can be used via a desktop computer, laptop or tablet (iPad) or mobile telephone. The technology is therefore readily available and does not require a high degree of technical proficiency to operate.

A number of providers offer facilities, such as Skype, WeChat, WhatsApp, ooVoo, FaceTime, Viber, IMO, Google Hangouts, and Google Duo.

Use relies on the availability of internet access and, if using a mobile telephone, the availability of networks in rural and remote areas. Slower connections can result in unreliable connections and poor-quality reception and is therefore not the ideal interpreting option.

Interpreting sessions using these facilities should be limited to small groups and, in the case of mobile telephones, a maximum of two people.

Further reading

- **Western Australian Language Services Policy 2020 and Guidelines**

