



When to engage an interpreter

Decision-making guide

**My Client is Deaf,
or hard of hearing**

**My Client is Aboriginal, or is from a
culturally and linguistically diverse
(CaLD) background**

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Does the immediate situation require an interpreter?

Determine the risk to your client, your agency and yourself if you do not engage an interpreter

- Does your client have an *I Need an Interpreter* card?
- Does your client use Auslan, or have other communication difficulties (Deafblind)?
- Does your client have limited communication skills in Standard Australian English?
- Is your client unable to answer a question clearly without assistance?
- Does your client consistently agree with the questions you put to him/her/them?
- Do you not understand what your client is trying to tell you, even if the words they use are clear to you?

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YES

- Immediately offer your client the services of an interpreter.
- Your client has the right to refuse this service. In this case, try to identify the reason for their refusal and address the issue.
- If they still refuse, document the reason and your actions.

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Is the situation general and routine (general health, education or community services)?

- Is a tertiary qualified and/or NAATI credentialed interpreter available?
- Is a NAATI recognised practising interpreter available in lieu of a tertiary qualified and/or NAATI credentialed interpreter?

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YES

- Confirm your client's name, Aboriginal name (if applicable), community, country and/or language group, age and gender.
- Ask them which language/dialects they prefer to communicate in (Aboriginal, CaLD language/s).
- Identify any cultural sensitivities, such as a female client preferring a female interpreter.
- Follow your agency's language services procurement (operating) procedures and guidelines.

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NO

- Consider engaging a telephone interpreter to gather sufficient information to deal with the immediate situation. If required, schedule a follow-up face-to-face meeting with your client and a tertiary qualified and/or NAATI credentialed interpreter. (Telephone interpreting is not suitable for Auslan speakers or people who are hard of hearing.)
- Consider engaging a bilingual staff member (if you have one) to gather sufficient information to deal with the immediate situation until a tertiary qualified and/or NAATI credentialed interpreter is available.
- Postpone the conversation until a tertiary qualified and/or NAATI credentialed interpreter is available.
- REMEMBER unless it is an EMERGENCY, avoid engaging a family member, friend or person under 18 to act as an interpreter.

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Is the situation more complex (mental health, medical, legal or technical)?

YES

- Engage a specialist interpreter with the knowledge and skills in the required field.
- Refer to your agency's language services procurement (operating) procedures and guidelines.