

Puget Sound Educational Service District  
CODE OF ETHICS  
FOR  
INTERPRETERS

**1. Confidentiality**

Interpreters must treat all information learned during the interpretation as confidential, divulging nothing without the full approval of the client and his/her staff member.

**2. Accuracy: conveying the content and spirit of what is said**

Interpreters must transmit the message in a thorough and faithful manner, giving consideration to linguistic variations in both languages and conveying the tone and spirit of the original message. A word-for-word interpretation may not convey the intended idea. The interpreter must determine the relevant concept and say it in language that is readily understandable and culturally appropriate to the listener. In addition, the interpreter will make every effort to assure that the client has understood questions, instructions and other information transmitted by staff member.

**3. Completeness: conveying everything that is said**

Interpreters must interpret everything that is said by all people in the interaction, without omitting, adding, condensing or changing anything. If the content to be interpreted might be perceived as offensive, insensitive or otherwise harmful to the dignity and well being of the family member, the interpreter should advise the staff member of this before interpreting.

**4. Conveying cultural frameworks**

Interpreters shall explain cultural differences or practices to staff members and clients when appropriate.

**5. Non-judgmental attitude about the content to be interpreted**

An interpreter's function is to facilitate the communication. Interpreters are not responsible for **what** is said by anyone for whom they are interpreting. Even if the interpreter disagrees with what is said, thinks it is wrong, a lie or even immoral; the interpreter must suspend judgment, make no comment, and interpret everything accurately.

**6. Client self-determination**

The interpreter may be asked by the client for his or her opinions. When this happens, the interpreter may provide or restate information that will assist the client in making his or her own decision. The interpreter will not influence the opinion of any client by telling him/her what action to take.

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## **7. Attitude toward clients**

The interpreter shall strive to develop a relationship of trust and respect at all times with the client by adopting a caring, attentive, yet discreet and impartial attitude toward the client, toward his or her questions, concerns and needs.

## **8. Acceptance of assignments**

If level of competency or personal sentiments make it difficult to abide by any of the above conditions, the interpreter shall decline or withdraw from the assignment.

Interpreters shall disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest that could affect their objectivity. For example, interpreters will refrain from providing services to family members, close personal friends except in emergencies. In personal relationships, it is difficult to remain unbiased, impartial or non-judgmental.

In emergency situations, interpreters may be asked to do interpretation for which they are not qualified. The interpreter may consent only as long as all parties understand the limitations and no other interpreter is available.

## **9. Compensation**

The fee agreed upon by the agency and the interpreter is the only compensation that the interpreter may accept. Interpreters will not accept additional money, considerations or favors for services reimbursed by the contracting agency. Interpreters will not use the agency's time, facilities, equipment or supplies for private gain; nor will they use their positions to secure privileges or exemptions.

## **10. Self- Evaluation**

Interpreters shall represent their certification(s), training and experience accurately and completely.

## **11. Ethical Violations**

Interpreters shall withdraw immediately from encounters that they perceive to be in violation of the Code of Ethics.

## **12. Professionalism**

Interpreters shall be punctual, prepared, and dressed in an appropriate manner, as well as being respectful and courteous. They shall maintain professional behavior at all times both while assisting clients and in their business dealings.

Interpreters shall seek to further their knowledge and skills, both in preparation for specific assignments and through continuing studies and training.

Source: This code is a combination of the Codes of Ethics from the Hospital Interpretation Program in Seattle, WA'; Boston City Hospital in Boston, MA; and the American Medical Interpreters and Translators Association (AMITAS) in Stanford, CA.