



Best Practices for Interpretation Services

Trained interpreters can facilitate effective communication between individuals, increase customer satisfaction, and reduce liability. In contrast, bilingual staff members serving as interpreters, who are not trained interpreters, can limit the effectiveness of the interpretation process and affect the quality of the service provided, as can students' family members and/or friends.

What to Expect of a Skilled Interpreter

The following considerations should be accounted for choosing an interpreter for assessment and school-based practice (Rhodes, Ochoa & Ortiz, 2005):

- An effective and qualified interpreter must have:
 - The ability to be fluent in English and the native language of the student or parent.
 - The ability to convey meaning from one language to another.
 - Sensitivity to the style of the speaker.
 - The ability to adjust to linguistic variations within different communities.
 - Knowledge about the cultures of the people who speak the language.
 - Familiarity with the specific terminology used in the educational field.
 - Understanding of the role he/she has to play in this team process.
- The interpreter should follow several **Ethical Guidelines**:
 - Keep all assignment-related information strictly confidential.
 - Transmit the message faithfully and using language understood by the person(s) whom they serve.
 - Not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions.
 - Accept only assignments for which they are qualified.
 - Be familiar with issues that often arise when interpreting from one language to another.

Tips for Requesting an Interpretation

- The **interpretation request** must be submitted using the online form: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/translation>. If possible, the request should be submitted when the family is notified about the meeting date and, at minimum, no less than 5 school days in advance of the requested date.
- Be sure to know what type of interpretation is needed (consecutive, simultaneous, or American Sign Language) before placing the request. If a request is submitted for consecutive interpretation, this is what will be provided and the interpreter cannot be asked to provide simultaneous service. (Note: Not all the interpreters have the ability to provide simultaneous interpretation and this can result in poor interpretation and miscommunication.)
- It is advised to request an interpretation (via the online form) with a start time of at least 10 minutes before the actual meeting. This will allow time for the interpreter to ask questions about procedures and other relevant information. Please use the “comments” field in the online request form to share any additional information that might be important for the interpreter to know beforehand.

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Tips for a Successful Interpretation Service

- Keeping in mind the following considerations can help to ensure a successful interpretation (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005):
 - Speak in short, simple sentences.
 - Avoid idioms, metaphors, or colloquialism.
 - Use specific terms and avoid jargon. Always review any professional vocabulary that could require a previous explanation.
 - Allow the interpreter time to translate all messages.
 - Check during the interpretation process to ensure student or parent understandings.
 - Supervise and ensure that the educational professional(s) are present throughout the entire interpretation process.
 - Look at and speak to the student or parent(s), not the interpreter.
 - Monitor the facial expressions of the interpreter and student or parent(s) for possible discomfort.
 - Feel free to ask the interpreter, student, or parent(s) if he or she has any questions or needs clarifications.
 - Encourage breaks for the interpreter throughout the process.

What to Do after an Interpretation Service

- After the interpretation service has been provided, it is recommended to take a moment to debrief with the interpreter and discuss any issues that may have arisen during the process.
 - After the service is rendered, please complete the online “Interpretation Feedback Form” found at: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/translation> . This will help ACPS to monitor and improve the quality of future interpretation services.

Questions

- If you have any questions regarding interpretation or other language access services, please contact Víctor Espinosa Sánchez, the Language Access Coordinator for ACPS at victor.espinosa.sanchez@acps.k12.va.us or by phone at 703-619-8347. He is available from 7.30 am to 4.00 pm Monday through Friday.

Reference

Rhodes, R.L., Ochoa, S. H., & Ortiz, S. O. (2005). *Assessing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: A Practical Guide*. New York, NY: Guilford Publications, Inc.