

Language Interpreter Services



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Tips for Working with Telephone Interpreters

- Start the session by clarifying roles and responsibilities for both you and the interpreter
- State your name and role (E.g. Doctor, nurse etc.)
- Brief the interpreter (don't assume the interpreter knows anything about where you are calling from) E.g. "Hello interpreter, my name is (Dr. ____). I am a family physician and I have a (Cantonese) speaking patient in the office with me today, (Provide some contextual info. (E.g. the patient here has flu like symptoms). Could you please introduce yourself to the patient and explain who you are and your role?")
- Always speak in first person, just as you would in normal conversation. E.g. Say, "Do you have a fever?" rather than "Ask her if she has a fever, please."
- Use the consecutive method of interpreting. After you speak one to two sentences or finish a thought, pause to give the interpreter enough time to interpret. You will experience pauses when the interpreter repeats each statement in the respective language.
- Be prepared to explain some things in more detail for telephone interpreter. Some terminology and concepts may not have an equivalent in the target language.
- Control the conversation. The telephone interpreter is only there to interpret. You are responsible for making sure the Limited English Speaking Person (LESP) receives the same service as an English-speaking client.
- Ask the LESP questions to ensure they understand what you want to communicate.

Some DOs and DON'Ts when Using Telephone-Based Medical Interpreters

DOs

- Consider what your role would be if your client were an English-speaking client
- Use your normal communication style
- Speak in clear, concise sentences
- Allow time after each sentence for the interpreter to interpret what you have just said
- Speak directly to the client, not the interpreter, using the first-person (E.g. 'what is your address?' vs. 'ask them what their address is')
- Provide simple, but full, explanations
- Ask questions if you don't understand, and allow the client and the interpreter to do the same
- Be patient – interpreted sessions will take longer than sessions in English
- Make sure the client understands

DON'Ts

- Don't interrupt
- Don't use idioms, technical terms or acronyms
- Don't expect the interpreter to frame questions or explanations
- Don't ask the interpreter to step outside their role (E.g. don't ask them to stay on the phone after client has left to ask additional questions)
- Don't ask the interpreter to summarize or give explanations