

Tips for Working with Interpreters

Good interpreters are invaluable resources for early interventionists since many of the providers do not share the client's language and cultural background. Developing and maintaining positive relationships with individuals who can help bridge the gap between families and interventionists is critically important for effective communication.

- **Make contact early**- initiate contact with your interpreter as early as possible to avoid scheduling delays.
- **Communicate with your interpreter before the 1st therapy session** in order to get to know one another, and to discuss working styles.
- **Work with your interpreter to learn simple greetings for the family and child and to learn the proper pronunciation of family member names.**
- At the beginning of a relationship with a family, always introduce yourself and the interpreter, describe your roles, and clarify mutual expectations.
- **Be Flexible**- it is good to have a vision of how you think you want the sessions to run, but you will want to be able to adapt for each individual family and interpreter.
- **Always address your communication and remarks to the family or child** (not the interpreter). Remember the interpreter is your voice with the family.
- **Make eye contact with the family and observe their nonverbal communication.**
- **Take responsibility for the communication of your message/manage the content -**
 - Use positive tone of voice and body language that conveys respect for and interest in the family
 - Be cautious with body language - you can say a lot without speaking a word
 - Speak clearly and somewhat more slowly (not more loudly)
 - Limit your communication to a few sentences at a time
 - Take appropriate pauses so that information can be interpreted with accuracy
 - Avoid technical jargon, idioms or slang
 - Avoid oversimplification and condensing important explanations
 - Give instructions in a clear, logical sequence
 - Periodically check on the family's understanding by asking them if they have any questions
 - When possible, reinforce verbal information with written materials and/or behavioral modeling
- **Remember that the interpreter is there to interpret everything that is said during the session** - so if you do not want it repeated do not speak it out loud.
- **Remember to ask the interpreter to interpret to/for the child as well**
- **Prior to leaving a session, always confirm with the family and the interpreter the next scheduled appointment**
- **Be patient and prepared** to the additional time that will most likely be required for careful interpretation.
- **Contact your CFC** to find out when provider meetings or workgroups happen so that you can link with other interpreters and providers.