Accessing Interpreting Services

When should an interpreter be engaged?

An interpreter should be provided in situations where a Non-English speaking client has difficulty communicating in English.

If unsure whether an interpreter is required, ask questions that require full sentence responses. Avoid questions that can be answered with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’. This will help you to assess the client’s English skills and the need for an interpreter.

**Please note:** Family members and friends **should not** be engaged as paid interpreters.

How do I access interpreter services?

Interpreters may be accessed for telephone or onsite interpreting.

**Telephone interpreting**

**Step 1: Speak with the client**
If possible, ask the client the following questions:

- Their name
- Which language they require
- The information they are seeking
- If they have any preferences for a specific gender, ethnic group or dialect

**Step 2: Gather your information**
The letter you received from the department outlining the new administrative process contains the information you are required to quote to TIS when engaging an interpreter.

**Step 3: Dial TIS National**
Dial 131 450

**Step 4: Speak with the operator**
Give the operator the following information:

- Your TIS code
- Service provider name
- Program/activity type
- The name of the client
- The language and dialect the client requires
- Any other preferences the client has requested (including gender of interpreter, ethnicity and other culturally specific requests).

If there is an appropriate interpreter available at the time of your call the operator will connect you to them immediately. If an interpreter is not available at the time of the call an appointment will be booked by the operator which you will need to confirm with your client.


**Step 5: When interpreter session commences**

- Introduce yourself and the client to the interpreter.
- Know the topic your client wants to discuss.
- Brief the interpreter. Describe the equipment and situation. (e.g.
Conference phone, single phone, office space, front counter, etc).

- Describe the purpose of the call.
- Explain the interpreter’s role to the client and emphasise that the interpreter should interpret everything the client says.
- The session should be approximately 20 minutes.

**In-person interpreting**

If telephone interpreting is not suitable, TIS can arrange an onsite interpreter to attend a location convenient to you and your client.

**Step 1: Gather your information**

When booking onsite interpreting ensure you have gathered the following information from your letter and your client to include in your onsite interpreting request:

- Your TIS code
- Service provider name
- Program/funded activity type
- The name of the client
- The language you require
- Any other preferences the client has requested (including gender of interpreter and cultural specific requests).

**Step 2: Book your interpreter**


Either fax or email the completed form to TIS National.

TIS National will organise an interpreter and send a confirmation to you with a job/reference number.

**Step 3: When the interpreter session commences**

- Ensure you have your job/reference number.
- Know the topic your client wants to discuss.
- Telephone TIS National on **131 450**
- Advise the operator that the call is pre-booked and quote the job number for connection to the booked interpreter.
- Introduce yourself and the client to the interpreter.
- Describe the purpose of the call.
- Explain the interpreter’s role to the client and emphasise that the interpreter should interpret everything the client says.

**What if TIS can’t provide an appropriate interpreter?**

In the event TIS are unable to provide the required interpreter service, please submit the following information to the department if your organisation/service wishes to receive reimbursement for engaging a service provider other than TIS:

- Date of contact with TIS National.
- The client specific needs that TIS National were unable meet (language, gender, cultural requirement).
- Interpreting service engaged that could meet all of the client needs.

Please submit this information to the department via email to interpreting.services@communities.qld.gov.au.

**Tips for face-to-face and telephone interpreting**

- Provide a quiet area where you can talk in private.
• Allow extra time to brief the interpreter first
• It is your interview; manage your role accordingly and maintain control throughout the interview as you would normally
• Speak with the interpreter and client simultaneously.
• Speak in the first person and address the client directly.
• Use short sentences, plain English and appropriate tone.
• Pause often to allow the interpreter to speak (eg after two or three sentences).
• Avoid jargon, jokes and figurative language.
• Speak naturally, but modify the speed at which you speak.
• When telephone interpreting, be aware that the interpreter has no body language cues to assist.
• If the conversation is going to be long (eg more than an hour), make sure you stop for a few minutes break every half hour.
• Ensure you can comfortably take notes.
• Ask whether the client’s needs have been met at the end of the session. Summarise the outcome/solutions. Ask the client if he or she has any questions.
• Clearly indicate the end of the session to all parties.

Important guidelines to be followed
• The interpreter should be engaged to assist with services your organisation is funded to deliver as specified in the letter you received from the department containing your client code
• The interpreting services should be provided by a professional interpreter that is accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd (NAATI) as a first preference, and NAATI recognition as a second preference. In the event that a NAATI accredited or recognised interpreter is not available in the required language, then a qualified professional interpreter may be used. Professional interpreters are bound by a code of ethics to maintain confidentiality, impartiality and accuracy.
• Ensure when engaging an interpreter through TIS National that you provide the operator with your TIS client code, the name of your service and the program it is funded through.
• Please ensure your TIS client code is kept secure and is only used for providing interpreting services for funded activities as specified in the letter you received from the department.
• If you encounter any difficulties using your TIS code, please contact the department via email at: interpreting.services@communities.qld.gov.au
• Ensure your organisation/service has a clear message on your answering machine that states your hours of operation, so that this message can be relayed to any Non-English speaking client that may use TIS to call your organisation out of hours. Or if there is an after hours service available for clients to call please ensure your phones are directed to the after hours services when your office is closed.

For more information on interpreting please go to: www.multicultural.qld.gov.au/services_and_resources/translating_and_interpreting_services/

For further information about Department of Communities funded NGO access to interpreter services contact:
Department of Communities
Phone: 3405 6450
Email: interpreting.services@communities.qld.gov.au