

QCOSS Queensland Council of Social Service



Engaging and working with interpreters



A collaboration of non-Government service providers and community organisations which:

1. Advocates for the engagement of credentialed interpreters in services to persons of non-English speaking backgrounds as part of a culturally competent service system
2. Promotes the growth and development of quality language services in Queensland

NAATI and AUSIT are advisers to QAIWG.

Purpose of today's session

- Cultural and linguistic diversity in Queensland
- Why might your organization need a policy for engaging and working with interpreters?
- The basics: What is interpreting? What is a credentialed interpreter? How do you know when an interpreter is required?
- Engaging and working with an interpreter: best practice
- Access to funding for engaging an interpreter
- Deploying bicultural/bilingual support workers

Cultural and linguistic diversity in Queensland

- 20.5% of the population (888,636) born overseas
- 9.8% of the population (423,841) speak a language other than English at home
- 10% of people with severe and profound disability, between the age of 0-65, come from homes where a language other than English is spoken (*Source: Census 2011*)
- 120,806 youth from CALD background reside in Queensland
- Between 2006-2011, the CALD youth population in QLD increased at a rate of 4.6% annually (*Source: Census 2011*)

Most requested languages in Queensland July 14-June 15 (*OnCall*)

Top 10 most requested for interpreting

Language	No. of Bookings
Vietnamese	1187
Farsi	970
Arabic	936
Mandarin	842
Somali	622
Tamil	614
Burmese	537
Dari	498
Karen	430
Auslan	417

Top 10 languages unable to be serviced

Language	No. of Bookings
Burmese	221
Somali	198
Tamil	185
Vietnamese	175
Dari	114
Cantonese	66
Karen	64
Mandarin	53
Rohingya	52
Dinka	38

Do you need a policy for engaging and working with interpreters?

Some questions to consider

- Is your service located in an area that is culturally diverse?
- Do you undertake outreach activities to inform people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities of your services?
- Do you have a culturally diverse client group?
- Is it likely that at some time a client may not have proficiency in the English language and will require the services of a credentialed interpreter?
- Would it be helpful to clients to be able to access multi-lingual materials about your services?

Do you need a policy for engaging and working with interpreters?

Some questions to consider

- Do you provide services to the deaf community?
- Is it likely that at some time a hearing impaired client will require the services of an Auslan interpreter?
- Does the organisation and its staff understand the potential legal and financial consequences of making a mistake or inadequate service delivery because a credentialed interpreter was not engaged?
- Does the organisation and its staff understand what a credentialed interpreter is and the role (skills and ethics) that all interpreters should display?

What is interpreting?

- Interpreting is the act of conveying information said in one language into another
- Interpreters can also provide a *verbal translation* or *sight translation* of forms if clients request this. Clients should also be offered a written translation
- Interpreting happens when 3 people (or parties) are involved in a conversation and one of them acts as an interpreter, converting the information from one language to another
- 2 people (parties) speaking in the same language does not constitute interpreting

An inexperienced interpreter acting simply as a “translation machine” can contribute to inaccuracy of interpreting and cross-cultural misunderstandings
(Lee 2009)

What is a 'credentialed interpreter'?

- **National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) accredits** interpreters and translators in languages for which there is a test available (NAATI Accreditation)
- NAATI **recognises** interpreters and translators in languages for which there is no test available (NAATI Recognition)
- Interpreters and translators must also demonstrate a high level of proficiency in English
- Interpreters and translators abide by a professional code of ethics (AUSIT Code of Ethics) and are accountable for their interpretations
- Interpreters and translators participate in training to enhance their work in specialist areas such as health and the legal system

Assessing the need for an interpreter

- Is the information being conveyed complex and is it important that the information is precisely conveyed?
- What is the impact of inaccurate interpretation on the individual?
- Could misunderstanding the information lead to a risk to themselves or others or to financial loss?
- Will miscommunication from a decision not to engage an interpreter, throw into question the validity of the information and any ensuing decisions?
- Who should make the decision about the need to engage an interpreter?
- What type of interpreter services are required: on site, video conferencing or over the telephone?

How do you know when an interpreter is required?

- A client may also present a Queensland Interpreter Card which indicates the language in which the client requires an interpreter on the front of the Card
- Assessment of the need for an interpreter is based on verbally testing that the client's low level of proficiency in English would interfere in clear and accurate communication between service provider and client
- If you are not sure if an interpreter needs to be engaged you can try the following: Ask one or two open-ended questions (instead of questions that just require a "yes" or "no" answer). Avoid asking questions that are familiar to the person such as "where do you live?" Ask the person to explain in their own words their understanding of a statement you make

Best Practice: Engaging and working with an interpreter

- Training of staff who may need to work with interpreters is important
- Disallowing children from acting as interpreters
- Advising against family and friends acting as interpreters in situations where it has been assessed and decided that a credentialed interpreter should be used
- When requesting an interpreter give as much notice as possible and be clear about the nature of the interpreting assignment so that an interpreter may decline the engagement if there is a risk of vicarious trauma, conflict of interest or where the terminology/issues to be discussed is beyond the interpreter's competence

Best Practice: Engaging and working with an interpreter

- Requesting an interpreter who is of the same, or is culturally sensitive to, the ethnic and religious background and gender of the client and, in some cases, at the request of the client, requesting an interpreter who is not of the same community (which may require requesting an interpreter by telephone from interstate)
- Checking the credentials/qualifications of the interpreter (ie evidence of NAATI accreditation or recognition) before commencing the session
- During the interview speak to and look directly at the client and direct questions and comments to the client not to the interpreter; speak in your normal tone of voice; use concise and well-constructed sentences; avoid jargon and slang; pause once you've conveyed one or two ideas to allow the interpreter to remember and interpret everything that you've said

Access to fee-free interpreting services

- Under the Queensland Government Language Services Policy all non-Government service providers funded by Queensland Government Departments to deliver services, are provided access to fee-free interpreter services by their funding body. Many service providers funded through Commonwealth Government Departments may also be eligible for access to fee-free interpreter services



Queensland Council
of Social Service

Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS)

One organisation's experience



IWSS' experience in developing the policy

- Ensure equity of access to the service for women of non-English speaking backgrounds and their children
- Enhance decision making for women accessing the service
- Working with interpreters embedded in service delivery framework
- Skills in working with interpreters core component in staff training and development

Role of bi-cultural workers

- Bicultural support not the same as interpreting
- Ability to hold a conversation in a language does not constitute proficiency to conduct professional interactions
- Language proficiency is different to cultural expertise/knowledge

How to know an interpreter is needed

- Verbal testing
- Understanding abstract or complex information
- Safety is a primary consideration at IWSS

Challenges when working with interpreters

- Language availability
- Timely access to language services when supporting women in crisis
- Perceptions among women about interpreters' role and ethics
- Women's reluctance to communicate through an interpreter

Benefits of working with interpreters

- Good practice in service delivery
- Clear communication and expectations
- Maximises service delivery outcomes
- Minimises risk of misunderstandings and potentially damaging outcomes



Queensland Council
of Social Service

Questions?

