

## **IDENTIFYING WHETHER AN INTERPRETER IS NEEDED AND TIPS FOR WORKING WITH AN INTERPRETER**

- 1) Determine whether your client needs an interpreter. If your client speaks a language other than English, use a language identification card to determine what language the victim speaks. If the client is unable to read in his or her native language, a language line may be able to assist you in identifying the client's language.
  
- 2) Immigrant clients who speak English may benefit from assistance of an interpreter because information about domestic violence and sexual assault is difficult to talk about and the victim may be able to communicate with you more effectively in his or her native language. Some clients may wish to communicate with you in English but may not be able to do so effectively. Both clients should be offered the assistance of an interpreter to communicate with you. Asking the following questions can help you assess your client's ability to communicate in English.
  - Please tell me your name.
  - Please also tell me how old you are.
  - How did you come to our program today?
  - If you work, what kind of work do you do?
  - How comfortable are you speaking with me in English?
  - Would you like me to provide you with free assistance to help you speak with me today? We can provide an interpreter to assist you.
  
- 3) If you will be using an interpreter you should initiate a pre-session with the interpreter: Explain that you would like the interpreter to interpret everything that is said, without adding, deleting or changing the meaning of anything. Explain that if the interpreter needs clarification of a term (frequently happens with legal and technical terms), the interpreter should ask you to clarify, rather than attempt to explain it to the client himself. Ask the interpreter to speak in the first person, so if the client says, "my husband hit me," the interpreter should state, "my husband hit me."
  
- 4) Assess the interpreter's qualifications to interpret by asking the following questions:
  - How did you learn English?
  - How did you learn \_\_\_\_\_ (non-English language)?
  - What training, experience or credentials do you have as an interpreter?
  - Have you received certification as an interpreter or been qualified to interpret in court? If so, what state?
  - Have you ever had any training on domestic violence (and/or sexual assault) issues?

- Are you familiar with the Code of Professional Responsibility for interpreters? If so, what are its main points? If not, would you be willing to agree abide by its terms?
  - Do you have any potential conflict of interest in this case? (e.g. do you know the perpetrator in this case or the perpetrator's family?)
- 5) Ask the interpreter to sign a confidentiality agreement, reassuring the client that the interpreter is bound by the same level of confidentiality that you are.
  - 6) Ask the interpreter to sign a statement that they agree to abide by the Code of Professional Responsibility for interpreters.
  - 7) When working with an interpreter speak slowly, in short sentences. Do not use technical or legal vocabulary or slang terms ("CPO," "DV"). Making these small changes will help an interpreter unfamiliar with domestic violence cases be able to interpret more accurately. Speaking in simple English without using technical legal terms, abbreviations or acronyms will help all victims better understand you.
  - 8) Position the interpreter diagonally behind the LEP client so that you are looking and speaking directly to the client. This position will avoid making the interpreter the focus of everyone's attention and help build trust and rapport with the client. Speak directly to the client, not the interpreter. Use the same body language that you use to communicate empathy with English speaking victims.
  - 9) Ask the interpreter to do the following:
    - Interpret everything you or the client says without additions, omissions, explanations or personal input.
    - Request clarification from you or the client if a phrase or word is not understood.
    - Be encouraged to take notes and use a dictionary to assist him or her in interpreting accurately.
    - Have you and the client slow down or pause so that he or she can interpret everything that the client says.
  - 10) When working with an interpreter you should also moderate what you say being sure to pause frequently so that the interpreter can keep up with you. Do not give a long explanation without a break. Ask the interpreter to tell you to pause or slow down so that he or she has time to interpret accurately.

11) Avoid side conversations between the interpreter and the client. If a side conversation begins, gently steer the interpreter back into her role as an interpreter by reminding her that you need to know everything that the client is saying. Reaffirm that if the client has questions they are asking the interpreter, you will answer those questions.

12) If you need the interpreter to verbally translate forms, allow plenty of time. Translation is a time-intensive skill and requires the complete attention of the interpreter