

**PEOPLE WHO SHOULD NOT INTERPRET IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND  
SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES**

<b>TYPES OF INDIVIDUALS</b>	<b>EXPLANATIONS AND DANGERS</b>
<b>Children</b>	Putting a child in the middle of a parental conflict creates significant pressure on the child, who is likely to feel torn regarding whom to side with; the child may be fearful of the batterer and may feel pressured to interpret in his favor; confidential communications with the victim can be compromised as the child may disclose information provided by the victim to the abuser, especially when pressured; children may not have vocabulary sufficient to translate legal information to the parent.
<b>Family member of the victim</b>	Despite the fact that a family member of the victim offers to volunteer, he or she may be blaming the victim for the abuse and not have a sufficient understanding of domestic violence to effectively provide support to the victim. The family member also might exaggerate the victim's testimony in order to support her, may provide additional information of their own, or they may not interpret correctly the victim's statements. Each of these can lead to affidavits, police reports, medical records and other documents that do not accurately reflect the victim's description of the abuse and can lead to inconsistent statement of the victim that can be used to discredit the victim-witness on cross-examination. Additionally, the family member might not have sufficient vocabulary to translate legal information to the victim.
<b>Family member of the perpetrator/primary aggressor</b>	A family member of the perpetrator could intentionally volunteer to interpret in order to control what the victim says or manipulate the victim's words. A family member of the defendant might blame the victim for the abuse or volunteer to interpret to protect the perpetrator from prosecution. The family member also might not have a sufficient understanding of domestic violence to effectively provide support to the victim.
<b>Friend of the family</b>	As with family members, a friend who offers to interpret may wish to control what the victim says, reporting back to the family and/or the perpetrator what the victim is saying or blaming the victim for the abuse. A friend might not have a sufficient understanding of domestic violence to effectively provide support to the victim. He or she also might not have sufficient vocabulary to translate legal information to the victim.
<b>The perpetrator/primary aggressor</b>	The perpetrator should never serve as interpreter for the victim. Sometimes persons posing as the victim's friends, family members or support persons may be the perpetrator or friends or family members of the perpetrator. To avoid this problem, it should never be assumed that the person accompanying the victim to serve as an interpreter is a safe to use as interpreter. The victim should be separated from the interpreter and asked who is accompanying them and whether the victim trusts that person or has concerns about being harmed by that person. Communication with the victim to assure safety of the interpreter can be accomplished using a language line or a domestic violence or sexual assault hotline with bilingual or multi-lingual language capacity. Use language identification card to determine the victim's language.
<b>Interpreter used by the</b>	A person who interprets for the batterer should not be asked or allowed to interpret for the

<b>perpetrator / primary aggressor</b>	victim. This would create a significant risk of replicating the dynamic of power and control that is used in a battering relationship. It could also inhibit the victim and limit what the victim is willing to discuss with the court and with court personnel.
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Source: Cultural Considerations in Domestic Violence Cases. Family Violence Prevention Fund.1999. Edited by Legal Momentum, 2006.