

## How to: ASSESSING THE NEED FOR AN INTERPRETER

### Advise that interpreters are available on request and are free of charge

<b>Why</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients may not request one because they believe there is a cost involved</li> <li>• Clients may not be familiar with the procedure for requesting or working with interpreters</li> <li>• Clients may not even be aware that such a service exists</li> </ul>
<b>How</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have translated information in community languages in the foyer which states that interpreters are available</li> <li>• Include information about the code of ethics of professional interpreters regarding confidentiality, accuracy and the procedure for working with interpreters</li> <li>• Advise verbally that interpreters are available and free of charge</li> </ul>
<b>Client Issue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients may be sensitive about their level of English proficiency</li> <li>• Client may have concerns about confidentiality</li> </ul>
<b>Service Provider Issue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is ultimately the (medico-legal) responsibility of the practitioner to make sure that communication is clear</li> <li>• Most of the time, it is easy to tell if an interpreter is needed</li> </ul>

### Ask the client if they need or want an interpreter

<b>Why</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is the most effective way of finding out if one is needed</li> </ul>
<b>How</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just ask 'Would you like an interpreter?'</li> <li>• You could get some information translated into community languages which you could use as a flashcard to ask this question</li> </ul>
<b>Client Issue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client may feel uncomfortable discussing sensitive issues with a third person</li> </ul>
<b>Service Provider Issue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the client declines, it is still the service provider's responsibility to assess if an interpreter is needed</li> <li>• Don't rely on the client's friends or relatives to stand in as interpreters, especially where children are being used to interpret</li> </ul>

### Ask the client simple questions about their personal details

<b>Why</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the client is having difficulty understanding relatively simple questions, then an interpreter is definitely needed</li> <li>• A non-English speaking background client who has been in an English speaking country less than two years is likely to need an interpreter</li> <li>• Many clients from non-English speaking backgrounds who have been in the country more than two years may still need an interpreter</li> </ul>
<b>How</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the client to spell out their address or say their date of birth – this can indicate both proficiency in spoken English and literacy level</li> </ul>
<b>Client Issue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The client may have had to answer these questions a number of times already so may be frustrated</li> <li>• The client may not know their exact date of birth</li> </ul>
<b>Service Provider Issue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A telephone interpreter could be introduced at this point if communication is difficult</li> </ul>

## How to: ASSESSING THE NEED FOR AN INTERPRETER *continued ...*

### Ask the client what main language they speak at home

<b>Why</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This will indicate which language the client is most comfortable using</li></ul>
<b>How</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check if a dialect is spoken or if the client is of a particular ethnicity</li></ul>
<b>Client Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Client may say English is the main language spoken at home, even though other languages are spoken</li></ul>
<b>Service Provider Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This information is important for data collection in the agency about demographics of clients and to satisfy funding and service requirements</li></ul>

### Ask a more detailed question, which requires more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer or ask the client to repeat something you have said in their own words

<b>Why</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This will let you hear their fluency and the kinds of words that they use</li><li>• The 'Do you understand?' question is likely to yield a 'yes' response regardless of the level of understanding</li><li>• Even more advanced conversational English can mean the client will have trouble understanding terminology</li><li>• Comprehension and spoken language ability are often at different levels</li></ul>
<b>How</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask 'How do you feel about that?' or 'Tell me what you think?'</li><li>• Listen for the client's use of verb tenses – low level of proficiency with tense could influence treatment or clinical assessment considerably (eg "I have medicine" versus "I had medicine")</li><li>• Avoid a familiar question like 'Where do you live?'</li></ul>
<b>Client Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In stressful situations proficiency is likely to decrease</li><li>• As clients age, their English skills may diminish</li></ul>
<b>Service Provider Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If you can't understand what point the client is trying to convey, then an interpreter is needed</li><li>• If you think that an interpreter is needed, it is important to explain to the client that it is just as important for your understanding as for their own</li></ul>

### Decide which type of interpreter is going to be most suitable

<b>Why</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Both telephone and on-site interpreting services are available</li><li>• On-site interpreting may be limited in rural and regional areas</li><li>• The gender of the interpreter may be of the utmost importance in some sensitive situations</li></ul>
<b>How</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check with the client if they have any issues with working with interpreters</li><li>• Use interstate telephone interpreters where confidentiality is an issue</li><li>• Ask the client whether they would like a male or female interpreter</li></ul>
<b>Client Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In small communities, the client may know the interpreter</li><li>• The ethnicity of the interpreter may also be important to the client, particularly when they come from countries where there has been political or civil unrest</li></ul>
<b>Service Provider Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There may be delays for interpreters</li></ul>