

What do clients need to know about interpreters?

Document Aim:

When an interpreter is used, clients may face many challenges related to:

- *Lack of trust and concerns about confidentiality*
- *Lack of understanding of their rights and responsibilities*
- *Lack of understanding of the role of the interpreter*

This flyer aims to provide clients with crucial information about the use of interpreters. Please use this as a quick guide to inform clients before commencing any service.

CLIENT INFORMATION

Who is an interpreter?

An interpreter is the person that has a job of helping service providers and you to communicate better with each other in order to accurately understand all concerns and needs.

What is the interpreter's role for you as the client?

- Must know your language and many aspects about your culture.
- Must speak the English language very well.
- Must interpret exactly what the service provider says to you without adding or omitting anything of what has been said.
- Must interpret exactly what you say to the service provider without adding or omitting anything you have said.
- Must NOT gossip or release any information about you to anyone in the community.
- Must NOT talk about your matter/business with anyone else without your permission.

The interpreter should never:

- Say what they think.
- Talk with you separately from the service provider.
- Give you advice.
- Be your family member or friend or have a conflict of interest as they may let their interests (business, community or personal) become more important than yours.

What are your rights?

You have the right to:

- Have an interpreter that you trust.
- Have a male or female interpreter when both genders are available.
- Have an interpreter from a particular ethnicity that you can understand and feel safe with.
- Have an interpreter present during your appointments or through a telephone.
- Ask the interpreter to repeat what was said if you did not hear well or have not understood what the interpreter is saying.
- Stop the conversation at any time if you feel uneasy or uncomfortable.

What are your responsibilities?

Your responsibilities are to:

- Come on time for an appointment.
- Not talk about your problems with the interpreter before seeing your service provider such as doctor, nurse, lawyer, social worker, counsellor, case worker and other professionals.
- Not ask the interpreter for advice or his/her opinion about your problem.
- Not ask the interpreter for a favour such as to transport you, even if both of you are going in the same direction.
- Not give a gift to the interpreter as he/she is bound by their professional Code of Ethics not to receive gifts.
- Show patience and respect when communicating through an interpreter by not talking for a long time and about many issues at the same time. The interpreter needs to remember what you are saying so that he/she will not forget anything of what you said.
- Complain to RASA if you are unhappy with the interpreter used or if you have concerns about their conduct so that something can be done to stop this from happening again.
- Lodge a complaint through AUSIT (Australian Institute of Interpreters & Translators), which is an organisation that has processes in place for investigating such complaints. You can call them on 1800 284 181 (FREE) or email them on admin@ausit.org.

