

## Tip Sheet

# Considerations When Using Interpreters for Victims with Limited English Proficiency

### 1. Complete and Accurate Interpretation

- a. The interpreter's comfort with domestic violence, sexual violence, and child abuse may have an impact on the interpreter's ability to interpret completely and accurately.
- b. The use of slang varies from region to region and from generation to generation. How victims may describe sexual violence or body parts may be misinterpreted if the interpreter is not familiar with the slang used by the victim.

### 2. Impartiality and Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest

- a. Be aware of the potential for interpreter bias. A competent interpreter will be able to interpret impartially. But individuals should be aware of the potential for interpreter bias to effect the impartiality of the interpreter. Forms of bias that could influence an interpreter include: cultural biases regarding men and women, victim blaming, age bias, and gender bias.
- b. Many interpreters come from the same community the victim is from. Relationships and the standing of an interpreter in the community could influence a victim's comfort and willingness to share her/his story.

### 3. Confidentiality

- a. It is important to reiterate to the interpreter and victim that all conversations are confidential.
- b. The fact that the interpreter has interpreted for the victim should also be confidential.

### 4. Legal Advice

- a. Interpreters role and standing in the community because of their English speaking ability, may create situations where the victim asks for advice, or the interpreter feels an obligation to provide advice. This is not the interpreter's role.

### 5. Assessing and Reporting Impediments to Performance

Considerations when using an interpreter for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

- a. Gender of interpreter may affect the victim's comfort around the interpreter. A victim who was raped by a male, may be uncomfortable with a male interpreter.

- b. Age difference between interpreter and victim could affect the victim's comfort with disclosing domestic or sexual violence. For example an older victim, may be uncomfortable disclosing that they were raped if they believe it is inappropriate to disclose information to someone who is younger.
- c. Proximity of interpreter. Victims of violence may be uncomfortable being in close proximity to another person. For instance interpreters often sit behind and slightly to the side of the individual they are interpreting for. A victim may be uncomfortable with someone sitting behind them.

6. Steps for ensuring competent interpretation

a. Conduct a pre-session with the interpreter

- i. Provide details on the case to ensure they are comfortable with the case, are familiar with the terminology and slang in the case, and are not familiar with the parties.

b. Educate the victim on the role of the interpreter

- ii. The natural inclination of a person is to speak to the person that speaks their language. A professional interpreter will not engage in side conversations, provide advice, or comfort the victim. Many professional interpreters will avoid eye contact, and not respond to questions directed at the interpreter. Victims may perceive this as hostility, shame, or victim blaming by the interpreter. To avoid this, it is important to educate the victim on the role of the interpreter, as a conduit of communication, and the code of professional conduct for interpreters.

c. Checking the quality of interpretation

- i. Use bilingual staff, another interpreter, or telephonic interpreter to check in with the LEP individual regarding the interpreted conversation. Have the LEP individual repeat back pertinent parts of the conversation. Ask the victim about their comfort level with the interpreter.



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