



Nine Core Competencies for an Interpreter in Community or Health Care Settings

The Competent Interpreter:

1. Introduces self and explains role.

Ideally, the interpreter consults first with the provider to learn the goals of the medical encounter. Then, the interpreter explains their role to both the patient and the provider, emphasizing the professional obligation to transmit everything that is said in the encounter to the other party and maintain confidentiality.

2. Positions self to facilitate communication.

The competent interpreter should be seen and heard by both parties, but should find the position that is least disruptive to direct communication between provider and patient.

3. Reflects the style and vocabulary of the speaker.

The competent interpreter attempts to preserve the style, dialect, and formality of speech, as well as the depth and degree of emotion expressed by the speaker.

4. Uses consecutive interpretation mode and speaks in first person.

The competent interpreter selects the mode that best enhances comprehension, which will usually be to interpret for the patient and the provider alternatively.

The interpreter encourages direct communication between patient and provider by using “I” rather than “he said that...” or “she said that...”

5. Accurately and completely relays the message between patient and provider.

The competent interpreter re-expresses information conveyed in one language into its equivalent in the other language, so that the interpreted message has the potential for eliciting the same response as the original. The interpreter does not alter or edit statement from either party, or comment on their content. The goal is for the patient and the provider to feel as if they are communicating directly with one another.

6. Respects the patient’s privacy.

The ethical interpreter respects the patient’s physical privacy. In addition, the interpreter refrains from becoming personally involved in a patient’s life.

7. Maintains professional distance.

The ethical interpreter understands the boundaries of the professional role, promotes patient self-sufficiency and monitors their own personal agenda.

8. Knows limits.

The ethical interpreter refrains from interpreting beyond their training, level of experience, and skill.



Attachment 23: Nine Core Competencies for Interpreters (con't)

9. Demonstrates professionalism.

The ethical interpreter clearly understands their role and refrains from delivering services that are not part of the role. In addition, the interpreter avoids situations that might represent a conflict of interest or may lead to personal or professional gain.

Source:

Journey of Hope
Immigration and Refugee Services of America