

# WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH INTERPRETERS

Creating physical spaces that are culturally responsive and result in a sense of belonging is an important aspect of the Community Conversation. It is critically important to learn from the perspectives of our culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The following guide is geared for spoken language, not American Sign Language, interpreters.

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## PLANNING AN IN-PERSON GATHERING

**When planning a gathering of people who will be in a physical space together, providing interpreters to ensure effective communication will enable all participants to understand and share their thoughts. The following checklist is intended to guide the use of interpreters at your event.**

### 1. Planning Prior to the Event:

- As noted in the Community Conversation Planning Guide, it is important to select members of your Planning Team who have connections to communities of color or organizations that have built trusted relationships with communities of color. These Planning Team Members will likely be able to recommend logistical considerations (time and place to hold the event) and people who can help with outreach, interpretation/translation, and follow-up with the community. These are important and sometimes labor-intensive responsibilities, so make sure they are distributed across several members of the Planning Team.
- Set aside enough time for the event. If you are interpreting back and forth between English and another language, you will want double the duration of the event.
- If you are just beginning in planning events with interpreters, it's good to start with just one language in addition to English (e.g., Spanish and English).
- Identify the language(s) that require interpretation.
- Choose a time, date and location that will work for participants with the least flexible schedules and who have transportation barriers (e.g., after work hours)



- Remind the participants of the event time and date via phone, text, or social media groups in their language. Email is not a reliable way to communicate and send reminders.
- Invest in relationships with interpreters. A good working relationship with qualified and reliable interpreters will help families communicate and make it easier for you to plan future events.
- Send the interpreters the following information 1 week before the event so that they have time to prepare.
  - Purpose and subject matter of the meeting.
  - Agenda for the meeting
  - The roles of those who will support including the presenter, notetaker
  - Estimated number of participants they will be interpreting for
  - Common terminologies and acronyms used.
- Make sure to find an interpreter who is knowledgeable of disability and Special Education terminology.
- Arrange seating such that the participant has direct eye contact with presenter, not with the interpreter.
- Prior to the event, schedule a one-hour meeting with the interpreters, facilitator and table hosts to:
  - Review the purpose and subject of the meeting
  - Roles of the Facilitator, Table host/Notetaker
  - Determine a plan for communicating if people need to slow down (e.g. hand signal or raising hand)
  - Let the Facilitators, Table Hosts and Interpreters know that participants will be asked to evaluate both the quality of the event and interpretation.
  - Answer any questions.

## 2. During the Event:

- Presenters should speak to the participant and not the interpreter. If possible, the interpreter should sit behind the participants to remind others to speak to the participant.
- Presenter should speak clearly and concisely.
- Pause to allow the interpreter to start interpretation or finish their sentence.
- Check your pace to allow time for interpretation and the the participant to process critical information.
- Avoid talking side conversations because they are difficult to interpret.
- Read body language of the participant, rephrase if you suspect there might be a misunderstanding.
- Avoid jargon, acronyms, idioms that are difficult to interpret or specific to American culture



- It's okay for the presenter or facilitator to admit that they are nervous to lighten the mood and show vulnerability.

### **3. After the Event:**

- Debrief with the interpreter:
  - Was the information offered prior to the meeting enough?
  - How was the pace of the entire meeting?
  - Was the information presented easy to interpret?
  - Constructive feedback about the things that went well and suggestions for improvement.
- Ask the participant to provide feedback on:
- The Meeting
  - How was the pace of the entire meeting?
  - Was the information presented understandable?
  - Were their opinions and thoughts able to be fully articulated during the meeting?
  - The interpreter's performance. Use the Interpreter Evaluation Form which has been translated into many different languages.
  - Constructive feedback about the things that went well and suggestions for improvement.

