**Tips for Working with Interpreters  
A successful interpreter encounter begins with an introduction in which the interpreter’s role is clearly established**. Every meeting should begin with:

* Confirmation that the client and interpreter speak a common language and understand each other
* A description of the role of the interpreter and its limitations
* A review of confidentiality provisions
* A brief overview of what to expect during the session and how long it will last

Briefly familiarize the interpreter with the nature of the encounter beforehand, and advise him/her of any relevant documents or terminology to study ahead of time, if necessary. Allow the interpreter to explain how he or she works (use of signals, short sentences, etc.).

**Remember that you are in control of the meeting,** and the relationship and rapport should be established early on between you and the client. Do not allow the interpreter to become the center of the encounter.

**Always maintain eye contact with the client and speak to him/her directly.** Make sure that the interpreter is sitting in such a way that this is possible. Enforce the requirement that the interpreter never have side conversations, and make sure he/she asks permission before clarifying anything with the applicant.

**Help the interpreter maintain professional distance from the client.** Ask the interpreter to wait outside the room when you are not in the room.

**Transparent communication.** You expect the interpreter not to have side conversations because you are excluded from them; do the same for the client. If you have to speak to the interpreter once the encounter has begun, advise the client that you are about to talk to the interpreter, and make sure the content of your side conversation is interpreted, too. **Never expect that the interpreter will not translate a comment that you make. Your interpreter should interpret everything that is said in the room, regardless of the person the comment is addressed to.**

**Try not to ask compound questions-just ask one question at a time.** Avoid this: “Do you know where your appointment is, and if so, do you know how to get there?”

**Carefully pronounce names, numbers, and acronyms.**

**Some languages do not have exact equivalents.** The interpreter may need to speak a full sentence to convey a single word. If you suspect the interpreter is adding something to the message, ask him/her about it, but keep in mind that this may be the case.

**Do not hurry; speak at a normal pace. Be patient with the interpreter and client.**

**Allow time for breaks.** Interpreter fatigue is a significant factor in diminished accuracy. The interpreter has a demanding mental task, and is the only one in the encounter who will be speaking the whole time. Short breaks are recommended for encounters lasting longer than an hour.

**Allow the interpreter to take notes**. At the end of the encounter, the interpreter should hand you back the paper, except for separate notes taken on terminology that he/she may wish to save for study.

**Be familiar with the interpreter code of ethics, so you can support the interpreter in upholding them.**