



INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATING POLICY

Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI)

This policy directs DCSI staff when and how to use interpreting and translating services.

Table 1: Document Details

Policy Number	To be assigned
Applies to	All DCSI staff, including contracted staff
Issued by	Community Services
Delegated Authority	Tony Harrison
Policy Custodian	Sue Wallace
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Table 2 – Revision Record

Date	Version	Revision description

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1. Policy Title

Interpreting and Translating Policy

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that speakers of languages other than English are not disadvantaged when accessing or receiving DCSI services and information. It provides guidance to DCSI staff on the use of interpreting and translating services to aid communication with community members and enable informed decision-making.

3. Context

The South Australian population is dynamic, and its ever-growing diversity gives vibrancy to South Australian life. We come from over 200 countries and speak over 200 languages. About 250,000¹ South Australians speak a language other than English, including 3,600 people who speak more than 20 Aboriginal languages and about 860 people who use sign languages.

This policy acts to address language barriers to understanding, accessing and contributing to government services. It recognises the social and economic disadvantage faced by many people who have limited English language proficiency, including many:

- Aboriginal people
- migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, and
- people who have a disability or disorder (including a range of communication and neurological disorders) that limits their ability to communicate in English.

Facilitating accurate communication between people who have different language needs is an important component of fair and responsive information and service provision. Language services assist South Australians to access the necessary information and services they need to fully participate in society and everyday living.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all DCSI divisions and their respective staff, including statutory bodies affiliated with DCSI. DCSI-funded organisations are also strongly encouraged to adopt this policy.

¹ Estimate only. Calculated by applying 2011 Australian Census responses about language spoken at home to South Australian population projections (medium) for 2016. Range: 239,000 to 307,000.

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This policy addresses language barriers only. Further guidance may be required where there are other barriers to communication and decision-making (e.g. when working with children and/or people with intellectual or cognitive impairments).

5. Policy Detail

Interpreting services must be offered to a client upon their request or when it is suspected that proficiency in English language is a barrier to effective communication and understanding between a member of the public and DCSI staff. Written material should be translated (into another written language) or provided in other appropriate formats (such as a voice recording) for client groups where practicable. This is particularly critical where informed consent is required and/or where there is the potential for a decision or action to impact upon a person's life.

It is expected that staff adhere to the following principles:

- It is a basic right of members of the public to understand and be understood in their communications with government and government services.
- It is a commitment and responsibility of DCSI to provide access to interpreting and translating services that assist members of the public to understand and be understood in communications with DCSI.
- The provision and use by DCSI of interpreting and translating services is based on fairness, equity and mutual respect.
- The interpretation and translation of culture (e.g. values, relationships) and non-verbal communication (e.g. eye contact, tone, posture) can be as important as the interpretation and translation of language.
- The provision of, and support for the use of, interpreting and translating services are critical components of effective DCSI information and service design, delivery and accountability.

5.1 Procurement of interpreting and translating services

5.1.1 Interpreter and translator credentials

When interpreting or translating is required, DCSI staff must engage a NAATI-accredited interpreter or translator whenever available and, in their absence, a NAATI-recognised interpreter or translator. DCSI staff may

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contact various interpreting and translating services (including larger interstate services) or change an appointment time to ensure this quality of interpreting or translating service.

5.1.2 Preferred providers

Where interpreting and translating services are needed to communicate between English and non-Aboriginal languages (including Auslan), DCSI staff should seek the services of an interpreter through the [DCSI preferred provider](#).

Where interpreting and translating services are needed to communicate between English and Aboriginal languages, refer to the [South Australian Aboriginal Languages Interpreters and Translators Guide](#) for a list of

5.1.3 Using services other than the preferred providers

DCSI staff may engage interpreting and translating services other than the preferred providers (outlined in 5.1.2) if:

- a NAATI-accredited or NAATI-recognised interpreter or translator is not available through the preferred provider but is available through another provider;
- the client expresses a desire to engage a particular interpreter or translator, for example, whose service has been satisfactory on another occasion or who has experience in the subject matter or specialised terminology required;
- the client expresses a desire to engage an interpreter or translator outside of their local community, to protect their anonymity or confidentiality (i.e. an interstate interpreting and translating service may be engaged); or
- another interpreting or translating service otherwise better meets the client's needs (e.g. can provide an interpreter of preferred gender).

5.1.4 Mode of interpreting

DCSI staff should choose the most appropriate format of interpreting service for each situation:

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- Face-to-face interpreting occurs when the interpreter attends in person and provides access to both verbal and non-verbal communication channels. Face-to-face interpreting should be used in situations when complex or lengthy matters will be discussed, including where documents and consent forms are involved.
- Telephone interpreting is limited to verbal communication (i.e. excluding non-verbal cues). It is a cost-effective option that is appropriate for simple communications that are not lengthy, and may provide more immediate access to interpreters (e.g. in circumstances where pre-booking is not an option). Telephone interpreting is often used to communicate with clients in regional areas.
- Video conference interpreting provides both verbal and non-verbal communication channels and is an alternative to telephone interpreting where agencies have access to video conferencing facilities. Video conference interpreting provides a practical option when sign language interpreters are not available locally.

5.2 Use of bilingual workers for simple interpreting and translating

Provision of interpreting and translating by bilingual workers is only recommended where simple, non-sensitive interpreting is required. A qualified interpreter should be called on to interpret complex, detailed or sensitive information.

Bilingual workers do not replace interpreters. Knowing a language other than English well for everyday communication is not the same as having the ability to effectively manage dialogue between two people or accurately convey complicated information from one language to another, which is what credentialed interpreters and translators are qualified to do. Conflicts of interest may also bring into question a bilingual worker's impartiality. Refer to [The role of bilingual workers](#)

Staff who are required to use their language skills in their employment may seek reimbursement in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment's [Determination 3.2 Employment Conditions: Remuneration - Allowances and Reimbursements](#).

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5.3 Use of family members and friends for interpreting and translating

There may be instances where, for practical reasons, a client's family member, friend or carer may be asked to interpret simple messages, such as where and when an appointment has been scheduled.

However, where information is complex, technical or sensitive, it is strongly discouraged to rely on a client's family, friend or carer to provide interpreting. This can create a range of ethical and practical issues as they may have poor language skills or act without impartiality. Even with the best of intentions, their involvement may pose unintended risks to the client if there is a conflict of interest or information is represented inaccurately. Refer to [Can family and friends provide interpreting services?](#)

Clients may bring a family member, friend, carer or bilingual worker to any appointment with a qualified interpreter for comfort or support.

Although credentialed interpreters and translators are required to abide by codes of conduct, clients may still feel that their confidentiality or anonymity are compromised, particularly in smaller communities where it is likely that the client and interpreter know one another. In such circumstances, DCSI staff may engage an interstate interpreting or translating service provider.

5.4 Monitoring and reporting

DCSI staff have a responsibility to log all occasions on which interpreting or translating services are required, including:

- when an interpreter was engaged
- when an interpreter was required, but client refused
- when an interpreter was required, but not provided
- when a translator was engaged

Records must be logged on the [DCSI Interpreting and Translating Register](#) and record keeping is to be managed within each DCSI division.

The purpose of the register is to assist in departmental planning and budgeting for interpreting and translating services, and to identify and respond to any issues in not providing interpreting services when required.

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6. Risk

DCSI's clients may be unfairly disadvantaged if decisions are made by staff that result in inequitable access to services due to language barriers. There is a risk that policies, programs and/or services will not be appropriate if the language needs and interests of those who have limited English language proficiency are not considered.

7. Definitions

Interpreter: the person who facilitates communication between two parties who use different languages. The interpreter conveys a verbal or signed message from one language into another language. This can be done face-to-face or by telephone or video. Interpreters are credentialed through the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) and may be NAATI-accredited or NAATI-recognised.

Translator: the person who makes a written transfer of message or statement from one language to another. Translators are credentialed through the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) and may be NAATI-accredited or NAATI-recognised.

Person with limited English language proficiency: any person who is not confident or has limited ability to communicate in English in a particular circumstance or environment, even if they do have the ability to speak some English.

Bilingual worker: a staff member who is fluent in two or more languages. Their language proficiency and interpreting skills may or may not be formally assessed.

National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI): NAATI is the national standards body for interpreters and translators in Australia, and is the only agency in Australia that provides accreditation for credentialed interpreters and translators.

NAATI-accredited: a level of competence achieved by interpreters and translators, as assessed through an examination process conducted by NAATI.

NAATI-recognised: formal acknowledgment of recent and regular interpreting or translating experience awarded by NAATI to a person who speaks a language (usually an emerging language or a language for which there is low community demand) for which NAATI does not offer accreditation.

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8. Reference Documents

8.1 Directive documents

This policy is directed by:

- [Equal Opportunity Act 1984 \(SA\)](#)
- [Public Sector Act 2009 \(SA\)](#)
- [South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Act 1980 \(SA\)](#)
- [Disability Services Act 1993 \(SA\)](#)
- [National Disability Strategy 2010-2020](#)
- [South Australian Government Universal Access and Inclusion Guidelines](#)
- [South Australian Policy Framework: Aboriginal Languages Interpreters and Translators](#)
- [Commissioner for Public Sector Employment Determination 3.2 Employment Conditions: Remuneration – Allowances and Reimbursements](#)
- [Multicultural Action Plan for South Australia 2017-2018](#)
- [Cultural Inclusion Framework for South Australia](#)
- [DCSI Access and Inclusion Plan 2014-2018](#)

8.2 Supporting documents

The following documents guide the implementation of this policy:

- *Using interpreting services to communicate with people*
- *Using translating services for written materials*
- *Language list by country and place*
- *How to decide whether to use an interpreting service*
- *The role of bilingual staff*
- *Can family and friends provide interpreting services?*

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- *Using interpreting services: conflict of interest*
- *Interpreting services: your rights and responsibilities*

9. Aboriginal Impact Statement Declaration

The South Australian Government's Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division and DCSI's Aboriginal Senior Leadership Group have been consulted during the development of this policy. This policy has a direct, positive impact on the lives of Aboriginal South Australians.

10. Policy Approval

<p>Content Author: Amanda Jurisevic Strategic Policy 8207 0387 Date: 19 / 06 / 2017</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Manager: Gillian Britton Strategic Policy / /</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>Miranda Roe Director, Strategic Policy and Projects</p> <p>/ /</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>Sue Wallace Executive Director, Policy and Community Development</p> <p>/ /</p>
<p>Comments:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">APPROVED / NOTED</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chief Executive</p> <p style="text-align: center;">/ /</p>	

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Using interpreting services to communicate with people

This checklist is for use by service providers when engaging an interpreting service to communicate with an individual or group, either face-to-face or by telephone or video conferencing.

Preparation

- Identify when to engage an interpreter (see [How to decide whether to use an interpreting service](#)).
- Identify the language and dialect required. If the client cannot provide the information, contact a language service provider or use a country and language list (see [Language list by country and place](#)).
- Identify the format of interpreting service required (face-to-face, telephone or video conferencing).
- Identify the appropriate provider of interpreting services (e.g. a NAATI-accredited interpreter or bilingual worker). (see [The role of bilingual staff](#)).
- If possible, ask the client about any preferences they may have for the interpreter such as the interpreter's gender, ethnicity, or whether they are sourced from outside of the local community (an interstate interpreting agency may be used).
- When a series of appointments are required, if possible, ask the client if they would like to use a different interpreter for each appointment to safeguard impartiality, or the same interpreter for each appointment to support continuity of care.
- Determine any real or perceived conflicts of interest with the proposed interpreting method, and make a plan to avoid them (see [Using interpreting services: conflict of interest](#)).
- Familiarise yourself with non-verbal cues (e.g. eye contact, tone, posture) and cultural values (e.g. family roles) that might be common to your client's background.

Additional considerations for group forums

- Consider having both male and female interpreters and/or separate forums for males and females, if the issues being discussed are gender sensitive.
- Depending on the composition of the audience and the issues being discussed, consider separate consultations in relevant community languages.
- Consider whether written material should be available in relevant community languages. This may include promotional material for the meeting, materials that might be referred to during the meeting, information about seeking further information, and how to give feedback or make a complaint.

Booking an interpreting service

- Contact a preferred interpreting and translating service and ask to book a NAATI-accredited or NAATI-recognised interpreter (see [Interpreting and Translating Policy](#) for preferred providers).
- Provide the required information. This usually includes:
 - the client's name
 - notification if you or your client/group wish to have a particular interpreter, for continuity
 - the language and dialect
 - any preference for the interpreter (e.g. a particular interpreter who has previously provided satisfactory service or an interpreter of a particular gender or ethnicity)
 - date, time and exact location the interpreter is required (include some time prior to the interview to brief the interpreter)
 - approximate duration of the interview

- type of interview (e.g. medical, legal, police interview) and nature of matter to be discussed
- name and telephone contact details of person to whom the interpreter reports
- information about the telephone system that will be used, if applicable (e.g. speaker phone)
- the agency contact, address and/or email for invoicing.

Before the meeting

- Sight the interpreter's NAATI ID card when meeting them on-site
- Brief the interpreter about the meeting topic, context, likely discussion and/or any sensitivities
- If the meeting will occur on site, arrange the seating to optimise communication between the staff member, the client/group and the interpreter
- Check to see that the client and interpreter understand and are comfortable with each other
- Obtain suitable information products in the client's preferred language, if relevant
- Allow for extra time over the usual duration of an interview.

How to begin the meeting

- Introduce yourself and the interpreter to the client
- Sit opposite the client and speak directly to them, not to the interpreter (e.g. 'How are you feeling?', not 'Ask her how she is feeling')
- Explain the purpose of the meeting and how it will proceed
- Explain that the interpreter's role is only to interpret what is being said, that they must be completely impartial, that they are bound by a code of ethics and are required to keep to discussion confidential
- Explain to the client that questions or concerns can be raised at any time during the interview
- Ask the client to repeat key concepts back to you, to confirm their clarification
- Should you believe at any point that the non-English speaker does not understand, it is your responsibility (not the interpreter's) to explain more simply.

Etiquette

- Speak in a normal tone of voice and at a manageable pace for the interpreter
- Communicate using short sentences whenever possible
- Pause after about two or three short sentences to give the interpreter a chance to interpret
- Speak clearly and concisely, without using jargon or slang
- Keep control of the interview
- Don't try to save time by asking the interpreter to summarise
- Be aware that it may take more words than you have spoken to convey the message
- Stop speaking when the interpreter signals by raising a hand, or when starting to interpret
- Show any key information such dates or numbers visually, e.g. on paper, a whiteboard or projector
- Avoid lengthy discussions with the interpreter, because it will exclude the client. If you must discuss something with the interpreter, always tell the client what you are discussing and why.

After the meeting

- Record the outcomes of the meeting on file, including any issues or complaints regarding interpreting
- In the client's file, record that an interpreter was required, the relevant language, and any other information that may meet the client's needs in future (e.g. preference for a male or female interpreter)
- Provide any feedback to the interpreting service, if applicable.

Using translating services for written materials



Government of South Australia
Department for Communities
and Social Inclusion

This checklist is for use by service providers when engaging a translating service to translate written materials into other languages.

Sometimes resources are developed specifically for client groups who speak particular languages. Other times, resources that already exist in English are later translated into multiple languages.

Preparing the material for translation

- Consider your key message or key information to give to the target group
- Identify the literacy levels of the clients you are targeting and tailor the message accordingly. Are the client group literate in their first language? Is written text the best mode of communication? Would the message be better received if presented using pictures or in video format?
- Consider how to present the information as clearly as possible:
 - Don't use lengthy or complex text
 - Avoid jargon and slang
 - Consider maps and diagrams
 - Explain unfamiliar concepts
 - Spell out acronyms
 - Be aware of tone and type of language used to present sensitive issues
- Identify the appropriate medium for translated information (e.g. fact sheets, brochures, website, video, CDs or DVDs)
- Be aware of copyright laws and liabilities and seek written approval for use and translation of material
- Assess whether the material is sensitive or unfamiliar to the target audience. You may wish to consult with community members
- Be aware of cultural sensitivities and the reaction from your audience. How is the information handled or perceived in the clients' culture?

Identifying languages for translation

Some or all of the following questions may help to identify appropriate languages for translation:

- Who is your target audience?
This may reflect the South Australian population, your particular client group, or groups you are not currently reaching
- What language/s do they speak, and what level of English proficiency do they have?
The largest groups may already have good English proficiency and not need a translated resource. To meet the biggest need, translate materials into the most common languages spoken by your target group in which there are low levels of English proficiency
- What else do you know about your target audience?
Characteristics such as birthplace, time in Australia, age, gender, visa type or religion, may be helpful to identify service and information needs and, in turn, identify languages for translation.

Booking a translating service

- Contact a preferred translating service and ask to book a NAATI-accredited or NAATI-recognised translator (see [Interpreting and Translating Policy](#) for preferred providers)
- Provide any materials that will assist an accurate translation, such as background material or a glossary of common terms
- Inform/negotiate the terms of translation, including:
 - which parts of the material are to be translated (text, layout, graphics and tables)
 - any software or other requirements
 - final format (e.g. electronic/soft copy, hard copy, CD, video)
 - delivery address and method (post or email)
 - time frame, including turnaround time for any corrections or amendments
 - inclusions and exclusions in the cost such as: word count, turnaround time, administration fees, cancellation fees, correction fees, proofreading and editing fees.

The final translated product

- Ensure that the final copy is proofread by a translator. Check for misspellings, that the source document layout matches the final product (including fonts, consistent headers and footers, correctly-spelt names and page numbers)
- Consider having the document translated back into English for quality assurance purposes, and/or field test the document with relevant organisations
- Consider asking a bilingual community member to read through the document in both languages to check for accurate literal and cultural translation
- Ensure that each version of the document can be identified by a version number and that changes are clearly marked on each version for the translator
- Include a reference in English containing the document title and name of the translated language (so service providers can identify it easily for distribution purposes)
- Ensure a copy of the resource is available in English (so staff know what information is in the resource).



Language List

by country and place

The list may be used to identify the language spoken by a client, to assist you in booking an interpreting service. This list is not exhaustive.

Country	Language
Afghanistan	Pashtu, Farsi, Dari, Hazaragi, other Turkic and minor languages
Albania	Albanian (Tosk is the official dialect), Greek
Algeria	Arabic, French, Berber dialects
Andorra	Catalán, French, Castilian, Portuguese
Angola	Portuguese, Bantu and other African languages
Antigua and Barbuda	English, local dialects
Argentina	Spanish, English, Italian, German, French
Armenia	Armenian, Russian
Australia	English, Indigenous languages including Pitjantjatjara, Ngarrindjeri, Yankunytjatjara and Adnymathanha
Austria	German, Slovene, Croatian, Hungarian
Azerbaijan	Azerbaijani Turkic, Russian, Armenian, other
Bahamas	English, Creole
Bahrain	Arabic, English, Farsi, Urdu
Bangladesh	Bangla, English
Barbados	English
Belarus	Belorussian, Russian, other
Belgium	Flemish, French, Dutch, German
Belize	English, Spanish, Mayan, Garifuna (Carib), Creole
Benin	French, Fon, Yoruba, tribal languages
Bermuda	English
Bhutan	Dzongkha, Tibetan and Nepalese dialects
Bolivia	Spanish, Quechua, Aymara
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian (all formerly known as Serbo-Croatian); written languages use Latin and Cyrillic script
Botswana	English, Setswana
Brazil	Portuguese, Spanish, English, French
British Virgin Islands	English
Brunei Darussalam	Malay, English, Chinese
Bulgaria	Bulgarian; secondary ethnic languages
Burkina Faso	French, Indigenous African (Sudanic) languages
Burundi	Kirundi, French, Swahili, Kinyarwanda
Cambodia	Khmer, French, English
Cameroon	French, English; 24 major African language groups
Canada	English, French; Indigenous languages
Cape Verde	Portuguese, Criuolo

Country	Language
Central African Republic	French, Sangho, Arabic, Hansa, Swahili
Chad	French, Arabic, Sara, more than 120 languages and dialects
Channel Islands	Norman French, English
Chile	Spanish, Native American Indian languages
China (PRC)	Cantonese, Mandarin (Putonghua), and dialects (Daur, Kalmyk-Oirat, Lu, Peripheral Mongolian, Central Tibetan, Uyghur, Xibe, Zhuang)
Christmas Islands	Malay, English
Colombia	Spanish, Native American Indian languages
Comoros	Arabic and French, Shikomoro (Swahili/Arabic blend)
Congo, Republic of	French, Lingala, Monokutuba, Kikongo, and local languages/dialects
Congo (DRC)	French, Lingala, Kingwana, Kikongo, Tshiluba
Cook Islands	Cook Islands Maori, English
Costa Rica	Spanish, Creole, English
Côte d'Ivoire	French, African languages (Diaula esp.)
Croatia	Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian (all formerly known as Serbo-Croatian), Italian, Hungarian, Czech, Slovak, German, and other languages
Cuba	Spanish
Cyprus	Greek, Turkish, English
Czech Republic	Czech, Slovak, German
Denmark	Danish, Faeroese, Greenlandic (Inuit dialect), German, English
Djibouti	French, Arabic, Somali, Afar Dominica: English, French patois
Dominica	English, French, Patois
Dominican Republic	Spanish
East Timor	Tetum, Portuguese, Bahasa Indonesian, English, other Indigenous languages, including Tetum, Galole, Mambae, and Kemak
Ecuador	Spanish, Quechua, other Amerindian languages
Egypt	Arabic, English, Armenian, French
El Salvador	Spanish, Nahua (among some Amerindians)
Equatorial Guinea	Spanish, French, pidgin English, Fang, Bubi, Ibo
Eritrea	Afar, Arabic, Tigre and Kunama, Tigrinya, other Cushitic languages
Estonia	Estonian, Russian, Ukrainian, Finnish, other
Ethiopia	Amharic, Tigrigna, Orominga, Guaragigna, Somali, Arabic, English, Afar and 70 others
Faroe Islands	Faroese, Danish
Fiji	English, Fijian, Hindustani
Finland	Finnish, Swedish, small Sami (Lapp), Russian
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)	Albanian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Macedonian, Romanian, Slovene, Slovak, Turkish, other, (uses the Cyrillic alphabet),
Former Yugoslavia	Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Macedonian, Slovene, Slovak
France	French regional dialects (Provençal, Breton, Alsatian, Corsican, Catalan, Basque, Flemish)
Gabon	French, Fang, Myene, Bateke, Bapounou/Eschira, Bandjabi

Country	Language
Gambia	Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, Serer-Sine, Sarahole, Pulaar, Maninkakan, Mandjaque, Mandingo, Jola-Fonyi, Creole
Georgia	Georgian, Russian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Abkhaz
Germany	German
Ghana	English, Indigenous languages (Brong Ahafo, Twi, Fanti, Ga, Ewe, Dagbani)
Greece	Greek, English, French
Grenada	English, French patois
Guatemala	Spanish, Amerindian languages (23 Amerindian languages, including Quiche, Cakchiquel, Kekchi, Mam, Garifuna, and Xinca)
Guinea	French, Indigenous languages (Malinké, Susu, Fulani)
Guinea-Bissau	Portuguese, Criolo, African languages
Guyana	English, Amerindian dialects, Creole, Hindi, Urdu
Haiti	Creole, French
Honduras	Honduras: Spanish, Amerindian dialects, English
Hong Kong	Cantonese, Mandarin
Hungary	Magyar (Hungarian), other
Iceland	Icelandic, English, Nordic languages, German
India	Hindi, English, Bengali, Gujarati, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Kannada, Assamese, Sanskrit, Sindhi, and 1600+ dialects
Indonesia	Bahasa Indonesia, English, Dutch, Javanese, and 580+ languages/dialects
Iran	Farsi (Persian), Armenian, Azari, Kurdish (Ardalani, Falié, Kurmanji, Sorani), Arabic
Iraq	Arabic, Kurdish (Ardalani, Falié, Kurmanji, Sorani) Assyrian Neo Aramaic
Ireland	English, Irish Gaelic
Israel	Hebrew, Yiddish, Arabic, English, Russian
Italy	Italian, German, French, Slovene
Jamaica	English, Jamaican Creole
Japan	Japanese
Jordan	Arabic, English
Kazakhstan	Kazak (Qazaq), Russian
Kenya	English, Swahili, 25 ethnic group languages
Kiribati	English, I-Kiribati (Gilbertese), local Micronesian languages
Korea, North	Korean, South: Korean Kuwait: Arabic, English
Kuwait	Arabic
Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyz, Russian
Laos	Lao, French, English
Latvia	Latvian, Russian
Lebanon	Arabic, French, English
Lesotho	English, Sesotho, Zulu, Xhosa
Liberia	English, tribal dialects

Country	Language
Libya	Arabic, Italian, English
Liechtenstein	German, Alemmanic dialect
Lithuania	Lithuanian, Russian, Polish
Luxembourg	Luxembourgish, French, German
Macedonia	See Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Madagascar	Malagasy, French
Malawi	English, Chichewa, Tombuka
Malaysia	Malay, Chinese/Mandarin, Cantonese, Tamil, English
Maldives	Dhivehi, Arabic, Hindi, English
Mali	French, African languages
Malta	Maltese, English
Marshall Islands	Marshallese, English
Mauritania	Arabic, Wolof, French
Mauritius	English, French, Creole, Hindi, Urdu, Hakka, Bojpoori
Mexico	Spanish, American Indian languages
Micronesia	English, French, Chukese, Pohnpeian, Yapase, Kosrean
Moldova	Moldovan (similar to Romanian), Russian, Gagauz (Turkish dialect)
Monaco	French, English, Italian, Monégasque
Mongolia	Mongolian, Turkic, Russian, Chinese
Morocco	Arabic, French, Berber dialects, Spanish
Mozambique	Portuguese, Bantu languages
Myanmar	The Myanmar language (formerly Burmese), Karen, Chin, Rohingya
Namibia	Afrikaans, German, English, several Indigenous languages
Nauru	Nauruan, English
Nepal	Nepali, Newari, Maithali, Bhojpuri, Bhutia, Tharu, Tamang, and others
The Netherlands	Dutch, Frisian
New Caledonia	French, Melanesians languages, Tahitian,
New Zealand	English, Maori
Nicaragua	Spanish
Niger	French, Hausa, Songhai, Arabic
Nigeria	English, Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo, 200+ others
Norway	Bokmål, Nynorsk (forms of Norwegian)
Oman	Arabic, English, Indian languages
Pakistan	Punjabi, Sindhi, Siraiki (Punjabi variant), Pashtu, Urdu, Balochi, Hindko, Brahui, English, Burushaski, and others
Palau	Palau Micronesian, English
Palestinian territories	Arabic, Hebrew, English, French
Papua New Guinea	English, Tok Pisin, Hiri Motu, and 717 distinct Indigenous languages
Paraguay	Spanish, Guaraní
Peru	Spanish, Quéchua, Aymara, and other Indigenous languages
The Philippines	Filipino (based on Tagalog), English, regional languages: Tagalog, Ilocano, Cebuano, others
Poland	Polish
Portugal	Portuguese
Qatar	Arabic, English

Country	Language
Romania	Romanian, Serbian, Hungarian, German
Russia	Russian, others
Rwanda	Kinyarwanda, French, English
St. Kitts and Nevis	English
St. Lucia	English, Patois
St. Vincent/Grenadines	English, French patois
Samoa	Samoan, English
San Marino	Italian
São Tomé and Príncipe	Portuguese
Saudi Arabia	Arabic, English widely spoken
Senegal	French, Wolof, Serer, other ethnic dialects
Serbia and Montenegro	Serbian; written language uses Latin and Cyrillic script
Seychelles	English, French, Seselwa (a creole)
Sierra Leone	English, Mende, Temne, Krio
Singapore	Malay, Chinese (Mandarin), Tamil, English
Slovakia	Slovak, Czech, Hungarian
Slovenia	Slovenian, Serbo-Croatian
Solomon Islands	English, Solomon Pijin (English pidgin), 60 Melanesian languages
Somalia	Somali, Arabic, English, Italian
South Africa	Afrikaans, English, Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, Swati, XitsoKurdishnga, Setswana, Tshivenda
South Sudan	English, Arabic, Dinka, Nuer, Zande
Spain	Castilian Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Basque
Sri Lanka	Sinhala, Tamil, English
Sudan	Arabic, English, Dinka, tribal dialects
Suriname	Dutch, Surinamese (lingua franca), English widely spoken
Swaziland	English, Swazi
Sweden	Swedish
Switzerland	German, French, Italian, Romansch
Syria	Arabic, Armenian, Assyrian, Kurdish, French/English widely spoken
Taiwan	Chinese (Mandarin), Chines dialects
Tajikistan	Tajik, Russian, Uzbek
Tanzania	Swahili, English, local languages
Thailand	Thai (Siamese), Chinese (Mandarin), English, Teo-Chiew, Laotian, Khmer
Togo	French, Ewé, Mina (south), Kabyé, Cotocoli (north), and many dialects
Tonga	Tongan (an Austronesian language), English
Trinidad and Tobago	English, Hindi, French, Spanish
Tunisia	Arabic, French
Turkey	Turkish, Armenian, Kurdish (Ardalani, Falie, Kurmanji and Sorani)
Turkmenistan	Turkmani, Russian, Uzbek
Tuvalu	Tuvaluan, Ikiribati, English

Country	Language
Uganda	English, Swahili, Luganda, Ateso, Luo
Ukraine	Ukrainian, Russian, Romanian, Polish
United Arab Emirates	Arabic, Farsi (Persian), English as a second language
United Kingdom	English, Welsh, Scots Gaelic
United States	English, sizable Spanish-speaking minority
Uruguay	Spanish
Uzbekistan	Uzbek, Russian, Tajik, other
Vanuatu	Bislama (a Melanesian pidgin English), English, French
Vatican City	Latin, Italian, and various other languages
Venezuela	Spanish, various Indigenous languages in the remote interior
Vietnam	Vietnamese, French, English, Khmer, Chinese
Western Sahara region	Hassaniya Arabic, Moroccan Arabic
Yemen	Arabic
Zambia	English, local dialects
Zimbabwe	English, Shona, and local African dialects

This list of languages spoken in countries around the world is adapted from *Improving the use of translation and interpreting services: A guide to Victorian Government policy and procedures*, published by the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs in 2003.



How to decide whether to use an interpreting service

Barriers to effective communication in English

There are many things that can reduce a person's ability to communicate effectively in English, particularly when English is their second language. These include:

- stress
- unfamiliarity with the situation or uncertainty about what is expected
- an imbalance in power/knowledge between the parties
- background noise
- a conversation involving more than two people, especially if there is overlapping speech
- an inability to see the speaker's face
- people speaking too quickly
- the use of technical terms, figurative language, abstract nouns and complicated sentences
- effects of ageing (e.g. reverting to first language) or medical conditions (e.g. dementia)

Remember that the interpreter is not there just for the client. The interpreter is there for both of you, to help you communicate with each other.

Things to consider before you decide whether to work with an interpreter

Deciding how well a person speaks English (assessing English proficiency) is a complex task. Untrained people tend to significantly underestimate the amount of miscommunication that occurs when communicating with someone with limited English proficiency.

If a person speaks English as a second language and has had limited education in English, it is likely that you should work with a credentialed interpreter. This is especially true when you are dealing with specialised terminology and unfamiliar situations such as the medical and legal matters.

In some cases it is obvious that an interpreter is needed for effective communication. However, in many cases you will need to think carefully to identify people who can communicate in English about everyday familiar situations, but need the assistance of a credentialed interpreter to communicate in unfamiliar situations with technical language.

When to engage an interpreter

Engaging a credentialed interpreter is recommended if:

- requested by the client
- the client cannot comprehend or respond to basic questions in English
- understanding and responding between you and the client is difficult or limited
- the client relies on family members, friends or carers to communicate
- the client prefers to speak in his/her own language, or
- English is the client's second language, and the situation is stressful or complex.

Is communication between you and the client adequate?

Ask yourself, how close am I to the “ideal communication benchmark” – does the client **fully understand** me, and can they **fully express himself or herself** in this situation?

Another question to ask yourself – if you became ill in a non-English speaking country and had to rely on the client to interpret for you into English, would you be happy to proceed? If you would be hesitant relying on them to adequately communicate to you what was going on, you should not ask them to go through the same process without the assistance of a credentialed interpreter.

If you decide that the client does not need the assistance of an interpreter, you must be satisfied that they can handle the full range of language (including speed, technical terms and any information they may encounter that informs decision-making, such as complicated medication regimes or legal jargon. Otherwise, you are putting the client at a disadvantage compared to someone for whom English is a first language.

The dangers of biographical data

Some people who speak a language other than English will have had repeated experience providing biographical data to service providers in English (*where do you live, what’s your date of birth, are you employed, etc*).

Do not rely on the client’s ability to provide biographical data as the basis for deciding whether to work with an interpreter. Just because a client can adequately answer simple questions about their life, this does not mean they have sufficient English proficiency to provide and respond to complex information such as relaying symptoms or understanding legal processes or medical treatments.

If you ask a client, “do you speak English?” they may quite truthfully answer “yes”, because they do speak some English.

Instead, ask, “*what language do you speak most at home?*”

In order to get an accurate picture of a person’s English proficiency, move the conversation into topics and styles that require more detailed comprehension and response. Use open-ended questions to better gauge comprehension and communication skills when using English.

The dangers of over-modifying your speech

Often when we get the impression that a person does not fully understand us, we intuitively compensate by reframing unanswered open questions to “either/or” questions or “yes/no” questions. For example, “*Can you tell me how you feel?*” becomes “*Have you got a headache?*”

When you do this, the client becomes heavily reliant on your prompts, suggestions, tone of voice and other cues to enable the conversation to proceed. In other words, the client’s ability to communicate is limited to the questions you ask.

Even though the client appears to more easily answer questions with a yes/no response, you have not provided them with the option of fully explaining their own symptoms or opinions. Yes/no questions should not be relied on to decide whether to engage an interpreter.

How to talk with your client about the need for an interpreter

It is important to raise the topic of working with an interpreter in a sensitive manner. There may be a number of reasons a client might not want to work with an interpreter:

- They might not know what an interpreter does
- They might have had a negative experience with an interpreter in the past
- They might not want other people knowing about their business
- They might think they have to pay for an interpreter
- They may feel shame or anger because you are indicating their English isn't 'good enough'.

A suggested way to discuss the need for an interpreter

In most cases, your ability to discuss the need for an interpreter will depend on the client's ability to understand and communicate in English. One way you could raise this issue is by saying:

"Before we start talking, I want to ask you about what language we should use today. Maybe we can talk in English, or maybe it's better if we talk in your language. I don't speak your language, so if we think it's better to talk in your language I will ask an interpreter to help me."

Wherever possible, you should explain the interpreter's role before you directly ask the client what they think about having an interpreter present, so that they can make an informed decision:

"An interpreter is someone who speaks your language and speaks English and has had training to help them understand the technical/medical/legal words that you will hear today. The interpreter will put everything I say into your language, and everything you say into English. The interpreter must follow rules. They can't take sides. They must keep the message the same - they can't add anything or leave anything out. The interpreter must keep everything we talk about secret."

Determining the preferred language

A client's language cannot be determined reliably from their country of birth. For example, a person from China may speak Mandarin, Cantonese or another Chinese dialect. In some cases more than one language may be spoken.

The following steps may help to determine a client's preferred language:

- If a client speaks sufficient English, it may be possible to ask for their preferred language, especially if they have used interpreters previously.
- Use visual aids that list languages. The client may be able to point to the language they speak. See the [Language list by country and place](#)
- If this fails, contact an interpreting service, as they may be able to assist you to identify the language through a telephone interpreter.

Bilingual staff

The term 'bilingual' refers to people who speak two (or more) languages fluently. Many staff members have the ability to speak other languages and, in some cases, an ability to speak a language other than English is a requirement of their job role.

Knowing a language other than English well for everyday communication is not the same as having the ability to effectively manage dialogue between two people and accurately convey complicated information from one language to another, which is what credentialed interpreters are qualified to do.

As a general rule, bilingual workers may assist in simple communication, but should not be relied on to interpret complex, technical or sensitive information.

The role of bilingual staff in simple communication

Bilingual staff may be called on to meet 'simple communication' needs between a government agency and a client who has limited English language proficiency. Simple communication must be viewed as communication where the outcome has limited risk of adverse effects for both the person with limited English language proficiency and the agency.

Examples of simple communication include directing a client to a meeting room, promoting a resource or showing a client a form they need to complete.

Bilingual staff can also help to improve front-line services through increased cultural responsiveness, and can increase confidence and skill level among other staff in communicating with clients with low English language proficiency.

Providing interpreters for complex, technical or sensitive information

Credentialed interpreters, rather than bilingual workers, are required to interpret:

- Complex, technical or sensitive information
- Discussion that informs or includes decision-making or signing of agreements/forms
- Discussion where there is a high risk of miscommunication
- In situations where there is a (real or perceived) conflict of roles
- Information that may place the person with limited English proficiency or the Government agency at risk
- Any discussion or information that is legally binding

Issues to consider

There are a number of issues to consider to help decide whether the assistance of a bilingual worker or interpreter may be most appropriate:

- are they accredited or recognised by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)?

- are there ethical implications? Bilingual workers are not bound by The Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) Code of Ethics, but are bound by the Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector.
- is there a real or perceived conflict of interest in performing the role? (e.g. when the person providing the interpreting is also a decision-maker)
- is there potential for misunderstandings to occur? See [Using interpreting services: conflict of interest](#).

Language allowance for bilingual staff

Staff who are required to use their language skills in their employment may seek reimbursement in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment's [Determination 3.2 Employment Conditions: Remuneration - Allowances and Reimbursements](#).



Can family and friends provide interpreting services?

Can family members and friends provide interpreting services?

There may be instances where, for practical reasons, a client's family member, friend or carer may be asked to interpret simple messages, such as where and when an appointment has been scheduled.

Where information is complex, technical or sensitive, it is strongly discouraged to rely on a client's family, friend or carer to provide interpreting. This can have serious consequences:

- filtering of information/ lack of impartiality
- breach of privacy and confidentiality
- lack of adequate language skills in both languages
- lack of understanding of subject matter or specialised terminology
- using information for private advantage or gain
- discomfort or embarrassment felt by the client in discussing personal matters
- where topic or context is traumatic, vicarious trauma to the person interpreting.

Example of filtering:

Doctor to patient: "I suggest a Pap test to rule out cervical cancer"

Patient's daughter interprets to her mother: "The doctor wants to do some tests, Mum"

In this example, the patient does not receive the doctor's full message. As a result, she is not given an opportunity to ask questions about the procedure and has not given informed consent.

Example of lack of understanding of specialised terminology:

Nurse to patient: "You should fast for one day before the operation", meaning the patient should have no food for 24 hours.

Patient's friend interprets fasting in the context of Ramadan (where devotees fast between dawn and sunset), and interprets, "the day before your operation, you should wait until after sunset to eat dinner"

In this example, the patient's friend is not familiar with medical term 'fasting' and so misinterprets the instruction from the nurse. As a result, the patient is placed at risk.

Children under 18 years of age are not appropriate interpreters

A child should not be asked to interpret in any context because:

- they almost certainly do not have the required interpreting skills
- the process can seriously distort power and authority relationships within a family
- the parent or service provider may not be able to disclose all the information in order to protect the child from information that is not age appropriate.

A role for support persons

Clients may bring a family member, friend, carer or other support person to any appointment to provide comfort or moral support. Be aware that, even in a support role, having a family member or friend present may create a conflict of interest. Refer to [Using interpreting services: conflict of interest](#).

Using interpreting services: conflict of interest



Government of South Australia
Department for Communities
and Social Inclusion

Real conflicts of interest

A real conflict of interest is one where there is an actual conflict between an interpreter's duties and responsibilities, and their private interests. This is particularly true when the interaction could result in, or be manipulated to result in, financial gain for any party involved.

EXAMPLE – when the interpreter is also a relative of the person who has limited English language proficiency

Although the credentialed interpreter is expected to act impartially, a conflict may arise if the interpreter acts in a particular way to protect their own interest and/or to protect their relative.

EXAMPLE – when the interpreter is also the registered migration agent of the person with limited English language proficiency

The interpreter has an active interest in the outcome of the case, which could impact on their capacity to be impartial in their interpreting responsibility.

Perceived conflicts of interest

A perceived conflict of interest can exist where a third party could form the view that an interpreter's private interest could improperly influence the performance of their duties, now or in the future.

EXAMPLE – when the interpreter is also a decision maker in a child support case.

It may be perceived that a conflict of interest exists as the interpreter is not seen to be acting impartially and independently from the decision-making process.

Avoiding conflicts of interest

Conflicts of interest can be identified and avoided through the effective use of credentialed interpreters and translators. NAATI-accredited interpreters and translators are bound by the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) Code of Ethics, which requires disclosure when a conflict of interest occurs, or has the potential to occur.

Although the onus of declaring a conflict of interest rests with the individual interpreter, departmental staff should encourage the disclosure by:

- directing staff to ask the interpreter whether there is a real or potential conflict of interest before the assignment, and
- requesting interpreters to sign a conflict of interest declaration before the engagement.

To minimise any possibility of conflicts of interest in the future, departmental staff should record any relevant information on a client's file.

Bilingual staff and conflict of interest

A conflict of interest can arise when a bilingual staff member fulfils both the role of decision maker and interpreter.

While Government agency staff must adhere to the South Australian Public Sector Code of Ethics, the scope of this Code is not explicit in regard to circumstances where a bilingual staff member is communicating with individuals or groups. Staff are not bound by the AUSIT Code of Ethics which requires disclosure of any real or potential conflict of interest.

Refer to [The role of bilingual staff](#)

Family and friends and conflict of interest

Where information is complex, technical or sensitive, it is strongly discouraged to rely on a client's family member, friend or carer to provide interpreting. Should this occur, a conflict of interest may arise.

If a family member, friend or carer acts as an interpreter in a situation where a conflict of interest cannot be avoided, that conflict of interest must be appropriately managed and documented. Consent should be sought from the client to rely on the family member, friend or carer to interpret, particularly if they have a financial or other vested interest in the matters under discussion.

Refer to [Can family and friends provide interpreting services?](#)



Interpreting services: Your rights and responsibilities

The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion's commitment

The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) recognises that a significant number of people do not speak English to a level that allows effective communication with departmental staff.

You need to be able to understand and communicate with the staff member, and they need to be able to understand and communicate with you. An interpreter helps both of you.

All DCSI services are committed to providing interpreting services when required, at no cost to the client.

DCSI staff are required to provide interpreters that are accredited or recognised by the National Authority for Accreditation of Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), wherever possible.

The [Interpreting and Translating Policy](#) reflects DCSI's commitment to providing fair and equitable services that are of high quality and respond to the needs of the community.

DCSI implements this policy by ensuring that staff act on the obligation to provide effective, efficient and inclusive services through appropriate use of interpreters for people who are not proficient in English. Interpreting services might be provided face-to-face, by telephone or by video conferencing.

Your rights as a client

When you request an interpreter or are offered interpreting services, you have the right to ask for:

- a particular interpreter that you trust
- an interpreter from outside your local community, e.g. from an interstate interpreting service (for telephone and video interpreting only)
- a male or female interpreter
- an interpreter from a particular ethnicity
- interpreting to be provided in person, by telephone or by video.

While these cannot be guaranteed, your preferences will be accommodated wherever possible.

During interpreting, you have the right to:

- Ask the interpreter to repeat what was said if you did not hear well or have not understood what they are saying
- Stop the conversation at any time if you feel uneasy or uncomfortable.

Your responsibilities as a client

You should:

- give relevant and necessary information to the service provider to enable them to provide you the required services

- arrive on time when an appointment is booked
- show patience and respect when communicating through an interpreter by not talking for a long time or about many issues at the same time. The interpreter needs to remember what you are saying so that they will not forget any part of what you said
- complain to the service provider if you are unhappy with the interpreter or have concerns about their conduct, so that something can be done to stop this from happening again
- lodge a complaint through the Australian Institute of Interpreters & Translators (AUSIT), which is an organisation that has processes in place for investigating such complaints. You can call 1800 284 181 (free call) or email admin@ausit.org.

You should not:

- give a gift to the interpreter as they are bound by their professional Code of Ethics not to receive gifts
- ask the interpreter for a favour such as to transport you, even if both of you are going in the same direction.

The interpreter's role and responsibilities

The interpreter must:

- know your language
- speak English very well
- interpret exactly what the service provider says to you and what you say to the service provider without adding or omitting anything.

The interpreter must not:

- release any information about you to anyone in the community
- talk about your matter/ business with anyone else without your permission
- give their advice or opinion about the issue being discussed
- talk with you separately from the service provider (e.g. the doctor, counsellor or police officer).

Your family member or friend should not interpret for you

You may bring a family member, friend or carer to any appointment to provide comfort or support.

However, you may notice that the service provider does not want you family member, friend or carer to interpret for you. In the past there have been times where a family member or friend has interpreted for a client but:

- has accidentally miscommunicated an important message because they do not have the skills to interpret complex language or specialised terminology
- has not acted impartially
- has filtered information to 'protect' their relative or friend
- has shared the client's personal information or private matters with other people.

The service provider has a responsibility to use a professional interpreting service, which will provide an interpreter who has interpreting qualifications and who must act impartially and confidentially.