



Fact sheet 8: Interpreting services: Your rights and responsibilities:

This guide outlines the rights and responsibilities of both the client and interpreter when providing interpreting services.

The South Australian Government Interpreting and Translating Policy aims to ensure that all South Australians have equal access to government funded services regardless of their English language skills.

South Australian government services are committed to providing qualified interpreting services when required, at no cost to the client.

A client should never be asked to pay for an interpreter or to bring their own.

Your rights as a client

You need to be able to understand and communicate with the government staff member, and they need to be able to understand and communicate with you.

An interpreter helps both of you.

You, your carer, family member or a staff member may request the assistance of an interpreter.

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, to avoid these concerns re-occurring.

Complaints can be lodged through the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT). You can call 1800 284 181 (free call) or contact ausit.org/contact/

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 or 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 your family member, friend or carer to interpret for you.

There have been instances 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
- feels they must 'protect' their relative or friend by not providing all the information
- 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.

For more on the risks of family or friends providing interpreting services, please refer to Fact Sheet 5 - Can family and friends provide interpreting services?

Supporting resources

This document is part of a series of resources available to other South Australian Government agencies when developing their interpreting and translating policies.

DPC Interpreting and Translating Policy

South Australian Interpreting and Translating Policy for Migrant and Non-Verbal (Sign) Languages

Fact sheets

Fact sheet 1: Using interpreting services – a guide for service providers

Fact sheet 2: Using translating services for written materials

Fact sheet 3: Language list by country and place

Fact sheet 4: Deciding when to use an interpreting service

Fact sheet 5: Can family and friends provide interpreting services?

Fact sheet 6: Role of bilingual staff in your organisation

Fact sheet 7: Using interpreting services: conflict of interest

Fact sheet 8: Interpreting services: your rights and responsibilities

You can access all of the interpreting and translating resources on the [Department of the Premier and Cabinet website](#).

For more information:

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