



Language Access Toolkit **for** **Interpreters**

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Working with Families of Children with Special Health Care Needs



A Guide for Medical Interpreters

We heard from families and health care providers about their appreciation for interpreters and their suggestions for improving the interpretation experience.



Families and providers are more comfortable with in-person interpretation than other communication methods such as online, video, or phone. They have found that in-person interpretation is more effective, accurate, and reliable. When possible, offer in-person interpretation so families can benefit from understanding body language, facial expression and language all at once.



Families are worried that their medical information will not be kept private when the interpreter is someone they know from their community. Help families understand that you, as a medical interpreter, have to keep their information private. Talk to them briefly about how professional medical interpreters commit to privacy, invite them to ask questions, and discuss their concerns.



Families are worried that the interpretation will not fully express what they are trying to communicate to the provider. Sometimes they doubt the accuracy of the interpretation, especially if they have said a lot and very few words are shared with the health care provider. Before you begin interpreting, help the family understand that the process of interpretation may involve keeping ideas simple. Tell the family what you share with the provider and check to make sure the interpretation has captured what they want the provider to know.



Families are concerned that the medical interpreter might not understand their culture and dialect. Explaining your experience with their culture or dialect, or telling what you might not understand, can help families feel more at ease.

Interpreters should continue to promote language access and raise awareness to help the community understand the importance of having an interpreter by their side in the health care setting. You can share information in your community and encourage families to use these services, especially since language access services never cost the family money.

