Tips for Working with an Interpreter

Selecting an Interpreter

- Determine the interpreter's level of proficiency in English and the minority language
- Assess the interpreter's educational background and experience
- Be aware of the interpreter's communication style
- Try to use the same interpreter for multliple assignments so that you may establish a familiar working relationship

Prior to the Session

- Meet with the interpreter in advance to allow adequate preparation time
- Review the goals and procedures of the test and/or treatment materials
- Ensure that the interpreter understands your confidentiality policies
- Explain that the oral interpreter will need to limit non-verbal cues, such as hand gestures and vocal variation, that may impact assessment results
- Review test validity and reliability to ensure that the interpreter understands the need to avoid unnecessary rewording of testing prompts
- Establish a rapport with the interpreter
- Remind the interpreter to take notes on the client's responses
- Learn greetings and the appropriate pronunciation of names in the family's primary language or signs

During the Session

- Introduce yourself (as the speech-language pathologist) and the interpreter in the client's native language if possible
- Describe your roles and clarify expectations
- Ensure that the interpreter is taking notes
- Use short, concise sentences
- Pause frequently to allow the interpreter to translate information
- Allow enough time for the interpreter to organize the information for effective translation
- Periodically check with the interpreter to see if you are speaking too fast or too slowly, too softly, or unclearly
- Understand that words of feeling, attitude, and qualities may not have the same meaning when directly translated

- Talk directly with your client
- Be aware of non-verbal body language and gestures that may be offensive to the family's culture
- Avoid oversimplification of important explanations
- Provide written materials in the family's native language whenever possible
- Build in extra time for the session

After the Session

- Review the client's errors
- The interpreter should report the client's response as well as the anticipated response
- Avoid use of professional jargon
- Discuss any difficulties in the testing process
- Discuss any difficulties in the interpretation process