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BEST PRACTICES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION INTERPRETATION

INTERPRETERS

PLAN & PREPARE

- If possible, find out the names and titles of the people attending, and how many.
- Study terminology related to the student's disability and eligibility categories, as well as their school level.
- Study the **Parent Rights** and get familiar with the process.



QUICK TIPS

KEEP IN MIND



If you're a school-based interpreter, ask for a copy of the special education document ahead of time. If you're a contract interpreter, ask your agency to request as much information as possible.



Arrive **early** to talk with school staff about the meeting or unknown terminology.

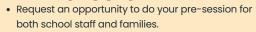


Remain **flexible** with your schedule as not all special education meetings are created equal.



Understand that the school must protect **confidentiality** and **family privacy** and may be able to only share basic information.

PRE-SESSION



- Ask school staff to spell out abbreviations.
- Remind all participants of the importance of **confidentiality** and to avoid **side conversations**.
- Disclose your skill limitations, if any.
- Ensure the families understand the importance of asking questions and providing feedback.

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Smile. These meetings are intimidating for everyone regardless of language or culture differences.

INTERPRET

- Ask school staff whether you should interpret consecutively or simultaneously and respect their preference.
- Ask questions and clarify. Accuracy and completeness of information are crucial.
- Ask for an example if a term or concept is unknown.
 Oftentimes, complex terminology is easier to understand through an example.





If you are interpreting virtually, ensure that the family has a chance to ask questions about the technology used.



BE PROFESSIONAL

Always use **formal** language when addressing families. Avoid simplifying information on your own. Rely on **school staff** and **families** to lead your **register** adjustments. **Respect** the family's wishes for their children's education. Do not undermine their decisions.

Do not assume the responsibility of **sight translating** long and complex text (such as Parent Rights). Demonstrate **professionalism** and **professional boundaries** by asking school staff to summarize the information for you.



Come prepared to take notes and learn new terminology for your next special education meeting.



Be prepared to sight translate documents always in the presence and under the guidance of school staff.

DEBRIEF

- Debrief with school staff after the meeting.
- Ask for and provide **feedback** to improve future special education meetings.



BEST PRACTICES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION INTERPRETATION

SCHOOL LEADERS AND EDUCATORS

KEEP IN MIND



Remember that trained professional interpreters must follow a <u>national code of ethics</u> and standards of practice.



If you are **bilingual**, meet with the interpreter **prior** to starting the meeting to understand the **expectations** of who will interpret when.



Meetings with an interpreter will take longer. Plan accordingly and inform the team of teachers present.

PLAN & PREPARE

- Ensure the interpreter selected has received specialized training in the field of special education
- For meetings longer than 1 hour, plan to have two interpreters. Interpreting is mentally
 exhausting, especially when complex information such as special education terms are
 presented.





SHARE INFORMATION

- Send the interpreter as much information as possible about the meeting to help them prepare.
 The interpreter can benefit from knowing the disability category and school level of the student.
- Share templates of special education forms that are used in your school district.
- Share the **names** and **titles** of the staff members present with the interpreter. This will help the interpreter come prepared and plan ahead for **seating arrangements** for in-person sessions.

ONE-ON-ONE

- Have a conversation with the interpreter before the meeting clarify terminology and cultural factors that may impede communication.
- Remember, interpreters are not culture experts. However, they can share valuable
 information about their specific experiences that may help guide you.
- Some interpreters prefer to relay information **simultaneously** (almost at the same time as you speak) or in **consecutive** mode (taking turns when speaking). Have a conversation with the interpreter ahead of time to select the **best choice**.
- Encourage interpreters to **ask questions** about **terms** they may not know.



SHOW RESPECT



Avoid **underestimating**the family's level of
education and
knowledge about special
education.



Maintain eye contact with the family, not the interpreter.

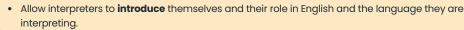


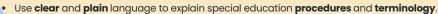
Use a **respectful** and **formal** style to address the family.



Respect the family's wishes for their children's education. Do not undermine their decisions.

DURING THE MEETING







- Understand that some terms may not exist in other languages and the interpreter may need more explanation and examples to be accurate.
- Allow time for the interpreter to relay the information.
- Pause after 3-4 sentences to allow the interpreter to relay the information accurately.
- Encourage everyone to speak one at a time.
- Everything spoken during the meeting will be interpreted. Side conversations are distracting
 and will prevent the interpreter from providing complete information to the family.

ROLES & RESPONSABILITIES

- Avoid asking interpreters for input, suggestions, or guidance about a family's decision. A
 trained and professional interpreter in education will remain neutral and impartial at all times.
- Some interpreters can read a document in English and relay the information to the family in their language of interpretation. However, you should remain present as **all questions** should be **directed to you** and not the interpreter.
- **Teach Back.** Make sure the family understands the information by asking them to tell you, in their own words and through the interpreter, what is heard.
- Notice **non-verbal cues** from the family or the interpreter that may reflect that they are not understanding or need clarification.

