

# What to expect when using interpreters on the phone

## Who is an interpreter?

An interpreter is a person who speaks your language. It is their job to help you say things and understand what is being said to you, if you don't feel comfortable speaking in English.

## What does an interpreter do?

Their job is to translate your words into English so that the worker you are speaking with understands you, and you can understand what is said in English. The worker could be your case manager, doctor, counsellor, community worker etc.

Interpreters are trained **not** to make comments, give advice or express their personal opinion.

**They should translate everything that is said and nothing more.**

## How does an interpreter help on the phone?

You, the interpreter and the worker will all be on the phone call at the same time even though you may all be in different places. When you speak, speak as if you are talking to your worker directly and not to the interpreter. After you finish speaking, the interpreter will translate what you said to the worker.

### What to do during the call

- > Use short sentences and wait for the interpreter to translate.
- > Be patient and wait for the interpreter to finish translating before speaking again.
- > Tell the interpreter if you don't understand something. You can stop any time to ask for an explanation or more information.



## What should I do if I know the interpreter?

If you realise you know the interpreter, it is your decision whether you want to continue using that interpreter. If you do not, you can tell your worker. It is okay to say you do not feel comfortable and end the phone call. A new appointment can be booked for another time with a different interpreter.

## What if I'm not happy with the interpreting?

If you are not happy with the interpreting, say so. If you are finding it hard to understand the interpreter you should let your worker know in the phone call. A new appointment can be booked for another time with a different interpreter.

## Can I request a male or female interpreter?

Yes. If you have a preference for a male or female you should say so when you are first asked if you need an interpreter. This might take more time to book an interpreter.

## Is it safe to tell the interpreter about my problems?

It is important that you share information in an honest and open way. Don't let fear or embarrassment keep you from talking and sharing any of your problems. Interpreters are there to make sure that you and your worker understand each other. There are rules about what an interpreter can and cannot do. (These are called the AUSIT Code of Ethics.) This means the interpreter can't talk to anyone else about your problems.

Using an interpreter over the phone helps with keeping what you talk about private because the interpreter cannot see you. If that is not enough, you can also ask to book an interpreter who lives in a different state (for example if you live in Victoria the interpreter might live in Queensland). You can also ask your worker to not use your real name in front of the interpreter. Please note that these options are not always possible.

### Things to remember

- > Interpreters are there to help you talk to your worker freely and openly.
- > Interpreters only interpret what is said: nothing more, nothing less.
- > Interpreters cannot tell anyone what you say on the phone call.
- > If you would feel more comfortable, you can ask for either a male or female interpreter.
- > If you are uncomfortable or are not happy with the interpreter you can ask for a new one.