

1. Choose a professionally trained interpreter rather than a family member, a friend or colleague.

Many people are not aware of the risk of using **untrained** interpreters. They also do not realise how demanding it is to transfer a message accurately, clearly and in full.

A **professionally trained interpreter** usually:

- is a native speaker
- is sensitive to community customs
- is professionally competent
- understands technical words and expressions
- is impartial
- does not have a personal connection to the customer
- is bound by confidentiality and a code of ethics.

A **friend or family member** may be less likely to pass on all points and details of the message. This may cause significant distortion of the contents. They may be less aware of role boundaries and tend to give personal advice and opinions. They are more likely to pass on private information to others, as they are not bound by a code of ethics or confidentiality agreements. The customer is less likely to speak openly if a family member is translating. A friend or family member has an important support and advocacy role, but should not be used for interpreting.



2. How to decide if an interpreter is needed

- Ask a few open-ended questions, something that needs an answer that is more than just “yes” or “no” e.g. “How can I help you?”; ‘What brings you here today?’
- Ask the customer to repeat instructions back to you—if they can’t manage this, an interpreter is probably a good idea. e.g. “Take this medicine every morning with your breakfast, for a week. When will you take these pills?”
- Look for indicative body language e.g. extra nervousness, a blank facial expression, or constant smiling.
- As a general rule: if you don’t understand the customer and/or the customer does not understand you, it’s time to get an interpreter.
- If a customer shows you a card similar to this, they are asking for an interpreter:



- If a customer phones up and says: ‘Hello..... Mandarin’ they are asking for an interpreter. That may be all they can say in English.
- Asking the person, ‘Do you need an interpreter?’ or ‘Do you understand what I’m saying?’ probably **won’t** help.
- If the customer is **deaf or hearing-impaired** they may not be responding to spoken language or may be using sign language. If you are unsure, on a piece of paper write the question: “Would you like a NZ sign-language interpreter?”

3. When to use face-to-face interpreters and when to use telephone interpreters

There are two main methods of interpreting:

- A. **Face-to-face interpreting** (also called onsite interpreting) is more appropriate for:
- subject matter that is complicated or technical
 - substantive issues, e.g. medical consultations
 - emotional situations
 - group meetings

Face-to-face interpreting needs to be booked in advance.

B. **Telephone interpreting** is more appropriate for:

- getting hold of an interpreter quickly for emergencies
- short, simple conversations, e.g. bookings, reminders
- access to a larger pool of interpreters

Telephone interpreting is available where there is a landline or mobile phone, at short-notice, and usually costs less. There is no need to book in advance.

4. How to get hold of an interpreter

REMEMBER: The interpreter is just one phone call away.

Language Line	Interpreting Canterbury	iSign
Phone: 0800 656 656 Telephone interpreting Monday – Friday 9am – 6pm Saturday 9am – 2pm www.language.govt.nz	Free phone: 0508 INTERPRET or 0508 468 377 or 03 372 9311 Both telephone and face-to-face interpreting This service is staffed 24/7 www.interpret.org.nz	Free phone/txt: 0800 WE INTERPRET or 0800 93 468 37738 or 021 554 484 or southern@isign.co.nz www.isign.co.nz
Phone Language Line (using your agency’s own access phone number if you have one) 1. State your name, agency and location 2. Request the language required 3. If you require a specific gender advise the call centre at this stage 4. Stay online while the operator connects you to the appropriate interpreter 5. Once the interpreter has been connected, introduce yourself (first name is fine) and provide a brief background on what the call is about (if known)	Phone Interpreting Canterbury 1. Give your name, agency and location 2. Request the language required, and if possible: 3. Give the date and time the interpreter is required 4. Give the approximate length of the appointment 5. Give the topic to be discussed, e.g. GP consultation, council rates, water restrictions, food licensing 6. And, if the issue is sensitive, give the gender of the customer 7. Interpreting Canterbury will make contact with appointment details	Phone Insign 1. Give your name, agency and location if possible: 2. Give the date and time the interpreter is required 3. Give the approximate length of the appointment 4. Give the topic to be discussed, e.g. GP consultation, council rates, water restrictions, food licensing 5. And, if the issue is sensitive, give the gender of the customer 6. iSign will contact with appointment details

5. How to work with an interpreter

For both face-to-face and telephone interpreting:

- Introduce yourself and the interpreter to the customer
- Tell the customer they can ask questions at any time
- Speak directly to the customer (as if the interpreter is not there, ignore the interpreter completely) Speak clearly and unhurriedly
- Pause every couple of sentences to allow the interpreter to keep up
- Wait until the interpreter has finished before continuing
- Use plain English.

Note also for face-to-face interpreting:

- Sit opposite the non-English speaking customer
- Position the interpreter at an equal distance from you both
- Talk directly to the customer as if you speak the same language
- Do not ask the interpreter to step out of their role, e.g. don't ask for their opinion or advice

Note also for telephone interpreting:

- Use a speaker phone if possible, or pass the handset.
- Wait while the interpreter is connected to the call.

6. The cost of interpreting services

- Interpreting services are normally **free to customers** with low proficiency in English.
- This reflects New Zealand human rights legislation and the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights which promote people's right to effective communication.
- In Christchurch, most government agencies, medical practices, schools and the Christchurch City Council access professional interpreting services.
- Agencies pay for interpreting services. For information about specific interpreting costs, contact the provider. For costs of using Interpreting Canterbury, phone 03 372 9311. For costs of using Language Line, phone 0800 656 656. For costs of using iSign, call 09 625 5036.

7. Resources and Support for Agencies

For additional resources and staff training options, contact the main providers:

- **Interpreting New Zealand/Canterbury** has fact sheets in different languages to support customers: www.interpret.org.nz/links/resources
- **Office of Ethnic Affairs Language Line** has cards and posters customers use to indicate their preferred language: www.languageline.govt.nz
- **iSign** – New Zealand's Sign Language Interpreting Service www.isign.co.nz

The information in these guidelines was written collaboratively by the Community Language Information Network Group (CLING) in Christchurch. The purpose of CLING is to strengthen communication with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups.

For more information, please contact

Maria Fresia
(Coordinator, Interpreting Canterbury)
Ph 372 9311 canterbury@interpret.org.nz

Jenni Marr
(Multicultural Adviser, Christchurch City Council)
Ph 971 8097 jenni.marr@ccc.govt.nz

Amanda McKendree
(Communicable Diseases Nurse, Community and Public Health)
Mobile: 027 213 8009 amanda.mckendree@cdhb.govt.nz

Terisa Tagicakibau
(Regional Adviser, Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs)
Mobile: 021 872 528 terisa.tagicakibau@mpia.govt.nz

Nicki Reece
(Station Manager, Plains FM)
Mobile: 027 360 7568 nicki@plainsfm.org.nz

Wayne Reid
(Ethnic Liaison Manager, Partnership Health Canterbury)
Mobile: 021 901 913 wayne@partnershiphealth.org.nz

In consultation with:

Office of Ethnic Affairs Language Line
Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand
Human Rights Commission | Te Kāhui Tika Tangata
Christchurch Migrants Centre Trust- Te Whare Ta Wahi



Christchurch City Council

Guidelines

*for Using Language and Sign Interpreters
- useful tips for Christchurch agencies*



Christchurch City Council