

# Sample Code of Ethics for Interpreters and Translators

- **Proficiency**

I have met the minimum proficiency standards set by the agency in the language for which I am being asked to interpret as demonstrated by passing the required examinations and receiving satisfactory training evaluations.

- **Confidentiality**

I will treat all information learned during the interpretation as confidential, not divulging any information obtained through my assignments, including but not limited to information gained through interviews or access to documents and other written materials.

The expectation that the interpreter will keep information confidential does not apply when disclosure is authorized by law or is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client or other identifiable person. In all such instances, interpreters should disclose the least amount of confidential information necessary to achieve the desired purpose. Remember: if you are a mandated reporter of abuse or neglect, then you must report.

- **Accuracy: Conveying the Content and Spirit of What Is Said**

I shall transmit the message in a thorough and faithful manner, giving consideration to linguistic variations in both languages and conveying the tone and spirit of the original message. A word-for-word interpretation may not convey the intended idea. I must determine the relevant concept and say it in language that is readily understandable and culturally appropriate to the listener. In addition, I will make every effort to assure that the client has understood questions, instructions and other information transmitted by the service provider.

- **Completeness: Conveying Everything That Is Said**

I shall interpret everything that is said by all people in the interaction, without omitting, adding, condensing or changing anything. If the content to be interpreted might be perceived because of cultural differences, as offensive, insensitive or otherwise harmful to the dignity and well-being of the customer, I will advise the Agency provider of this before interpreting.

- **Conveying Cultural Frameworks**

I shall explain cultural differences or practices to the provider(s) and clients when appropriate. I shall practice cultural competence and sensitivity.

- **Non-Judgmental Attitude about the Content to be Interpreted**

I understand an interpreter's function is to facilitate communication. Interpreters are not responsible for what is said by anyone for whom they are interpreting.

Even if I disagree with what is said or think it is wrong, a lie or immoral, I will suspend judgment, make no comment, and interpret everything accurately.

- **Client Self-Determination**

I understand that, as the interpreter, the client may ask me for my opinion. If this happens, I will not influence the opinion of the clients by telling them or offering them advice as to what action to take during or after the assignment.

- **Attitude Toward Clients**

I shall strive to develop a relationship of trust and respect at all times with the client by adopting a caring, attentive, yet discreet and impartial attitude toward the client, toward his or her questions, concerns and needs.

I shall treat each client equally with dignity and respect regardless of race, color, gender, religion, nationality, age, political persuasion or life-style choice. I will be sensitive and aware of dignity and respect within the context of the client's culture.

- **Acceptance of Assignments**

I understand that if my level of competency or beliefs or personal opinion makes it difficult to abide by any of the above conditions, I must make the Agency provider aware of this and decline the assignment or, if the assignment has begun, withdraw from the assignment for the well-being of the Agency provider and the client. I understand no adverse repercussions will follow because of my decision to refuse or withdraw.

I will disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest that could affect my objectivity. For example, an interpreter should refrain from providing services to family members or friends.

- **Compensation**

I shall not accept any fee or additional money, considerations or favors for my interpreter service from the client, patient or customer, or his friends or relatives. I further understand that I shall not use the agency's time, facilities, equipment or supplies for private gain, nor will I use my position to secure privileges.

- **Self-Evaluation**

I shall represent my qualifications, certification(s), training and experience accurately and completely.

- **Ethical Violations**

If I perceive encounters that I believe to be in violation of the Code of Ethics, I will inform the Agency provider immediately. If the situation cannot be resolved, I shall withdraw from the assignment.

- **Professionalism**

I shall maintain professional behavior at all times while serving or working with clients and professionals.

I have read the above Code of Ethics and by my signature, I agree that I will interpret according to the standards set forth and abide by their mandates.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Printed Name)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

## **Working with an Interpreter Best Practices**

1. Make sure your interpreter has read and abides by an Interpreter's Code of Ethics.
2. Give the interpreter your name and the name of the patient.
3. Give interpreter background information, including subject matter and potential issues that may be emotionally charged.
4. Allow the interpreter to give an introduction covering the process.
5. Let the interpreter ask for pauses for questions and clarification.
6. Avoid side conversations.
7. Keep statements relatively short.
8. Ask only one question at a time.
9. Use first and second person. Example: "I would like to know how you are today, Mrs. Gonzalez."
10. Avoid acronyms, highly technical terminology, slang, and metaphors. There are not always good equivalencies in both languages.
11. **DO NOT USE A PATIENT'S FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND TO SERVE AS THE INTERPRETER.**
12. Be patient.

Steve Lownes, Assistant Director  
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