

Mediating with Interpreters: Tip Sheet

- Give some attention to the seating arrangement. It helps if the interpreter can see everyone clearly.
- Explain the interpreter's role to the parties; the interpreter cannot do this. S/he only transmits the parties' words to you and yours to them. Explain this to the parties, so they understand that they shouldn't expect the interpreter to answer questions or give advice. Do this before your opening statement.
- Make space for the interpreter to do his/her job: a slower pace is important and pauses are helpful.
- Make efforts to control the flow of conversation so parties do not speak at the same time. Simultaneous speaking makes the interpreter's job very difficult.
- Do not leave the interpreter alone with parties. Leaving them alone can be very awkward because the parties may naturally try to converse, but the interpreter shouldn't engage in conversation with parties. It is best to invite the interpreter to take a break if you need to leave the room.
- Remember that you are communicating with the party. Remember to look at the party to whom you are speaking, not the interpreter. Refrain from asking the interpreter direct questions.
- Understand that the interpreter may need to interrupt the mediation to ask for a break or to call the interpreters' office for relief, if they interpret for too long without a break.
- Sign language interpreters need to watch their clients very closely to interpret correctly, so understand that the interpreter may look at the mediator very little.
- Plan to end your mediation 15 minutes before the stated end time. This will allow the interpreter to help with the scheduling of the next session and allow them to remain in compliance with the Interpreters office's time guidelines for each case.
- Inform your case manager if you expect to need more time to complete your mediation. The case manager will contact the Interpreters office to see if that is possible. This should only happen in rare cases such as high IPV or large property.