

Working with a Sign Language Interpreter

At NABS/NICSS, we appreciate it isn't an everyday experience working with a sign language interpreter. So here are a few helpful tips for you:

What is Auslan?

- ✎ Auslan is the language used by the Australian Deaf Community. Auslan conveys meaning through the use of hand shapes, movement and location in space in conjunction with facial expressions and the use of finger spelling. It has its own vocabulary and grammar and does not correspond to English - spoken or signed.

Why use a Professional?

- ✎ While a person who 'knows sign language' can generally converse with deaf people, qualified interpreters can deliver the information smoothly, accurately, and impartially, adjusting to specialised terminology. Qualified interpreters will sign everything that is spoken, and sign everything that is signed. They will not add to, edit, or censor the conversation. All interpreters booked through NABS/NICSS follow a strict Code of Conduct that stresses confidentiality, impartiality and integrity.

How to work with an Interpreter

- ✎ The seating/standing position of an interpreter is important. The best position is where the Deaf person can see facial expression and maintain eye contact with both the interpreter and the professional. Please consult with the Deaf client and organise this beforehand.
- ✎ Address the person directly, "Good morning Mr Smith" rather than speaking to the interpreter, "Can you tell/ask Mr Smith". Speak in your regular manner as the interpreter will sign simultaneously. The interpreter will convey the message directly, "I have not been well" rather than "he said he has not been well".
- ✎ Maintain eye contact with the Deaf client(s) and not the interpreter. An interpreter will sign all that is spoken, and will voice all that is signed almost simultaneously. There will be a slight 'lag time' and this ensures accuracy of information between both languages. The degree of delay will vary with interpreters and the complexity of material.
- ✎ Speak clearly and at your usual pace. It is easier for the interpreter to establish the context and a natural signing flow if you speak normally. The interpreter will tell you if it is necessary to change pace.
- ✎ Refrain from engaging in private discussions with an interpreter which you do not want interpreted. An interpreter must interpret everything that is being said, private discussions can be offensive to the Deaf client and embarrassing for the interpreter.
Also, avoid seeking advice from the interpreter.

If you have any questions about working with an interpreter please do not hesitate to ask the interpreter or contact NABS/NICSS on 1800 246 945.

