

# Collaborating with Interpreters and Families

*Communicating with families is key in sharing information between home and your school or center. Some families need an interpreter to best understand you. This tip sheet will give educators and other caregivers some tips in working with interpreters.*



## Do you need an interpreter?

- First, determine whether a family needs an interpreter. Your program may require an intake or parent information form when a child begins attending. This form may provide information about a family's home language.
- Some families who speak another language at home may be bilingual or multilingual and proficient in English. Ask the family what they need.

## Finding an interpreter

- Your school district or center may have access to interpreter services, so begin your search there. If the child is receiving early intervention (birth to age 3) services, you may have access to interpreters through the Illinois early intervention system. Additionally, there may be agencies in your community that provide interpretation services.
- Some interpreters may be able to support programs and families virtually through a video or phone call; check with them about possibilities. Searching for and finding interpretation services can also help additional families you might work with in the future.
- If there are no other options, you may need to use a family member or family friend to interpret, although this is not ideal. Do not use a child, such as a fellow student or an older sibling, as an interpreter.

## Planning for meetings with families

- Schedule meetings at times that work for everyone. Plan for any meetings to take twice as long when you talk through an interpreter.
- Give any relevant information to the interpreter before the meeting, especially if you are going to use specific educational terms such as speech development, motor skills, developmental screening, etc.

## Communicating effectively through the interpreter

- During the meeting, sit across from the family so you can see and speak to them easily without turning. Ideally the interpreter would sit next to and slightly behind the parent. This setup would be different when working with American Sign Language interpreters.
- Speak directly to the family and make eye contact with them, not the interpreter. Use your natural speech and language and positive body language. Say a few sentences and then pause so the interpreter has a chance to interpret.

## Keeping the family informed

- Take some time to summarize the meeting points and the next steps. Make sure to confirm your next meeting date together with the family and the interpreter.
- Provide the family with a written meeting reminder in the family's home language. Ask the interpreter to help write the reminder. As you wrap up, remember to thank the family and let them know that you enjoy working with their child.

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Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



Children's Research Center  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
51 Gerty Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7469  
Telephone: 217-333-1386  
Toll-free: 877-275-3227  
E-mail: [iel@illinois.edu](mailto:iel@illinois.edu)  
<https://illinoisearlylearning.org>



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