

Accessing Interpreter Services

The Australian Government provides financial support to government funded aged care providers to access interpreting services. TIS National is available **24 hours and day, seven days** a week and provides both telephone and onsite interpreting. TIS National can be used in both residential and home setting settings.

TIS National can be used to assist consumers with negotiating and understanding agreements, care plans, individualised budget and monthly statements, at no cost to them.

All government funded aged care providers have been allocated a **TIS National Unique Client Code**. This is required in order to activate access to the service. If you are unsure of your Unique Client Code contact TIS National on **1300 655 820**.

When can you use TIS National?

According to the Department of Health aged care providers can use TIS National for free to meet their responsibilities as an approved provider, such as to:

- discuss care needs, services and preferences with your client discuss fees and charges
- develop or review care documents, such as agreements, care plans and budgets

You should use phone interpreting services unless there's a genuine need for an on-site interpreter. If you use TIS National for other reasons, you must pay for the service through your funding or the client's budget.

Key considerations

Why access interpreters?

It is incumbent on aged care providers to ensure that they remove any language barriers which may preclude consumers getting full access to services and to making informed choices with respect to these services. The engagement of an interpreter service is necessary when a consumer is unable, or has a limited capacity, to communicate in English or indicates that they would be more comfortable communicating in his/her preferred language.

If you are unsure if you require an interpreter or the consumer declines the use of an interpreter, there are some simple steps you can follow.

- Explain to the consumer that the interpreter is important for you as the aged care professional to make sure you understand what they are saying.
- Reassure the consumer about the role of an interpreter and confidentiality of the service. Some consumers will try and use family members, who may discourage the use of professional interpreters.
- Let them know that they are entitled to the service and that the service is free in aged care services.
- If they are worried about knowing the interpreter (especially if they come from a small community) offer to arrange a phone interpreter from another state if allowed by your organisation.

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The role of TIS National interpreters

The interpreter's role is to provide accurate communication between you and your consumer whilst maintaining integrity, impartiality and confidentiality. It is not the role of interpreters to give advice to you or your consumer, complete forms for you or your consumer or impart unrelated information.

Accessing interpreters is particularly important in the following situations:

- conducting clinical and other needs assessments
- collecting detailed personal information
- explaining admission to/provision of a service
- developing and reviewing care plans/treatments
- explaining consumer rights and responsibilities
- gaining informed consent

Accessing TIS National

Call **131 450** and provide the operator with:

- your **Unique Client Code**
- name of your agency
- language needed
- your name
- contact phone number
- client's name
- clarify if you wish to access an interpreter by telephone or to organise an on-site interpreter.

Telephone vs on-site interpreting

It is important to determine if using a telephone interpreter is adequate for a given situation or whether on-site interpreting is more appropriate. Book an on-site interpreter if:

- the appointment is of a sensitive or serious nature
- requires in-depth sharing of information or gaining informed consent
- you have a scheduled appointment with the consumer,
- you anticipate that the appointment will go for an extended period of time.

To book an on-site interpreter, complete the online booking form at www.tisnational.com.au

Tips on working with interpreters

- Introduce yourself.
- Brief the interpreter on the main points you will be discussing.
- If using telephone interpreting, describe the type of phone you are using – speaker phone, dual handset or single handset.
- Always speak in the first person and speak directly to the non-English speaker.
- Allow the interpreter to clarify information if necessary.
- Establish and maintain control over the interview.
- Keep sentences short and include a pause after each sentence, so the participants do not talk over each other.
- Avoid jargon and speak in your regular voice.
- If it is a long call, the interpreter may require a few minutes break every 30 minutes.
- Clearly indicate when the conference call is over to all involved.

Accessing Interpreter Services (cont.)

- For on-site interpreting arrange seating in a triangular form positioning the non-English speaker directly opposite you and the interpreter to the side.

Use of the National Interpreter Symbol

The National Interpreter Symbol is a national public information symbol which provides a simple way of indicating where people with limited English proficiency can ask for language assistance when using government services. Aged care providers are encouraged to display the symbol in a variety of settings including client contact areas where language services are available. By displaying the symbol providers indicate to people with limited English that they are committed to providing accessible and equitable services, and that they can arrange an interpreter if needed.



Download the [National Interpreter Symbol](#)

Policy and procedures

It is important for all services providers to have a detailed policy and procedure accessing and utilising interpreter services.

Download the following PDF to help develop policies and procedures within your organisation.

[Developing a Policy for Use of Interpreter Services](#)

Useful resources

[Translating and Interpreting Service for aged care service providers](#)

Department of Health

[Working with TIS National interpreters](#)

TIS National

[‘Hints and tips for working with interpreters’ video](#)

TIS National

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