

Developing a Policy for Use of Interpreter Services

Australian Government approved aged care providers are eligible to access Commonwealth Government-funded interpreting services from the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National).

Under this arrangement, providers access services through a non-transferable TIS National code issued to the individual provider. The Department of Health is subsequently billed for those services by TIS National.

Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing has developed this sample policy template to assist aged care providers to develop a use of interpreter services policy. It is intended to serve as a *guide only* to be adapted to existing organisational policies and regularly reviewed in line with changing broader policy contexts.

The following documents provide details of current (2023) Department of Health and Aged Care policy on the use of TIS National for aged care service providers:

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

Department of Health

Other useful links

[Working with TIS National interpreters](#) (TIS National)

[Hints and Tips for Working with Interpreters video](#) (TIS National)

[Accessing Interpreter Services Practice Guide](#) (Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing)

[Communication Practice Guide](#) (Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing)

[Accessing Interpreting Services via TIS National](#) (Cultural Diversity in Ageing Conference video presentation)

For further information or advice about developing an interpreter services policy contact the team at Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing at info@culturaldiversity.com.au.

Use of interpreter services - policy template

Context and Purpose

(*Organisation name*) recognises that effective communication is essential in the delivery of high quality services. We are committed to ensuring that clients are able to communicate in their preferred language in order to:

- exercise choice and control about their own care and the way that services are delivered;
- understand their choices and communicate their decisions; and
- provide feedback about the services they receive.

This commitment is consistent with the expectations of ***The Aged Care Act 1997*** which recognises people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as a 'special needs group' and the Australian Government's ***Aged Care Diversity Framework 2017*** which aims to ensure that all aged care service providers are able to understand consumers' diverse characteristics and life experiences.

By failing to use accredited interpreters our organisation runs the risk of inadequate communication that could result in poor service and other adverse outcomes. As such relying on untrained bilingual speakers (such as family members, carers, volunteers and staff) in place of interpreters can lead to:

- privacy breaches;
- misinterpretations/misunderstandings;
- conflicts of interest;
- lack of impartiality;
- unintended harm; and
- legal consequences.

Policy Commitments

It is the intent of this policy that clients are informed of their right to communicate in their preferred language and that it is the responsibility of the organisation to offer and organise interpreter services.

Arrangements will be made to engage an interpreter through TIS National when:

- a client is undergoing assessment and care planning processes;
- a client care or service plan is under review;
- a client is being informed of their rights, responsibilities, and complaint mechanisms;
- essential information needs to be communicated and understood to inform decision making;
- giving informed consent;
- there has been a change of circumstances or care needs;
- seeking feedback from the client; and

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- a request is made by the client or their carers.

When promoting and using interpreter services we will ensure that:

- clients are informed of the availability of interpreting services;
- the National Interpreter Symbol is displayed at public points of contact with clients and on organisational collateral;
- language services are appropriate for the client including taking into account gender and ethnic preferences, relevant dialects and the appropriateness of either onsite or telephone interpreters;
- management and staff are trained on the protocols to access TIS National services, appropriate use of interpreters and how to work effectively with interpreters;
- the implementation of this policy is regularly monitored to ensure staff compliance and for the purposes of continuous improvement.

Scope

This policy is intended to ensure that no client be disadvantaged in receiving equitable quality services as a result of management and staff not communicating with them in their preferred language.

Responsibilities and Functions

It is the responsibility of the (*senior manager/team leaders*) to ensure their staff practice this policy and are appropriately trained in the access to and use of TIS National services.

It is the responsibility of the (*HR/PD*) team to provide training to staff on protocols for accessing and using TIS National services.

It is the responsibility of the (*quality/compliance*) team to:

- establish protocols for accessing and using TIS National services;
- ensure care and service plan documentation prompts staff to engage interpreters when required;
- identify and make available the resources required in order to facilitate the use of TIS National services by staff; and
- monitor the implementation of this policy regularly to continuous improvement, quality and compliance.

It is the responsibility of all staff to:

- advise clients of our policy to engage TIS National services in order that we understand their individual needs; and
- proactively use TIS National services in accordance with this policy.

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Definition of Terms

TIS National

TIS National (Translating and Interpreting Service) is an interpreting service provided by the Department of Home Affairs for people who do not speak English and for agencies and businesses that need to communicate with their non-English speaking clients. TIS National provides this service 24 hours a day, seven days a week for both telephone and on-site interpreting. The contact number for TIS National telephone services is 131 450. TIS National on-site interpreting requires booking online at: <https://www.tisnational.gov.au/en/Agencies>

Interpreter

An interpreter is a professionally qualified person who takes one oral (or sign language) and converts it accurately and objectively into another language to enable communication between two parties who do not share a common language.

Telephone Interpreting

Access to interpreters via the telephone / teleconference call.

On-site Interpreters

Access to interpreters on-site for face-to-face appointments.

Interpreter accreditation

TIS National interpreters are NAATI (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters) accredited. NAATI accreditation is the only qualification officially accepted for the interpreting profession in Australia. Accredited interpreters act in accordance with the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) code of ethics.



National Interpreter Symbol

The National Interpreter Symbol is a national public information symbol endorsed by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. The symbol provides a simple way of indicating where people with limited or no English proficiency can ask for an interpreter when using government and other services. All government agencies and other service organisations, community and private, are encouraged to use the symbol and promote the use of interpreters to their clients.

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