Working with Interpreters

May 8, 2008
According to Census 2000:

- 36,691 foreign-born people in Maine
- Almost 8,000 Mainers do not speak English well or do not speak English at all

According to Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP):

- 58,000 foreign-born people in Maine
Languages in Maine

- 89 heritage languages spoken by children in the State’s K-12 schools in 2003-2004 (Maine Department of Education data)

- 49 languages spoken in Portland Public Schools

- Largest language groups - Somali, Khmer, Spanish, Vietnamese, Acholi
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

“No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”
Opening Your Door to Language Minority Clients:

1. Assess the client language needs
2. Assess the program resources and practices
3. Establish the language access policy
4. Gather language resources (bilingual staff, outside contractors, translations)
5. Train staff
6. Monitoring
Interpreters & Translators: Defining the Profession

- **Interpreters** convert one *spoken* language to another – or, in the case of sign language interpreters, between spoken communication and *signed* language.

- **Translators** converts *written* materials from one language into another.
Interpreter Qualifications

• State of Maine has no requirements for training and certification of spoken language interpreters

• LANA Interpreter Requirements:
  ✓ High school diploma
  ✓ Language test
  ✓ 12-hour interpreter training
• Assessing the need for an interpreter

• Arranging for an interpreter

• Local resources

• Telephone interpreting services
When arranging for an interpreter...

- Establish the language/dialect/country of birth/gender preferences
- Whenever possible, the same interpreter for ongoing meetings
- Schedule an advance
- Allow enough time for the appointment
- Consider telephone interpreting when qualified interpreter is not available or confidentiality/small community is an issue
Family Members & Children as Interpreters

- Family members misinterpret 23-52% of questions asked by physicians (Health Disparities Initiative September/October 2003)

- 84% error rate by an 11 year old interpreter (“Errors in Medical Interpretation…”, Pediatrics, Vol. 111, No 1, January 2003)
Directory of Freelance Interpreters

Language Access for New Americans strives to maintain a database of best interpreters in Maine. Everyone in the directory has successfully passed a language proficiency test and has formal interpreter training. Each listing provides information about the individual’s language, location, rate, education and training, and availability. Please contact interpreters directly to request their services.

Language:  Acholi
Availability:  Any Time

Directory of Language Services Companies

The following agencies and companies provide interpreting and translation services in Maine. Please contact the organizations directly to request their services.

Catholic Charities Maine  RTSInterpreter
Interpreting and translation services in more than 40 languages
Contact Person:  Malvina Gregory
Phone Number:  207.523.2700
Roles of Interpreter

- Advocate
- Cultural Broker
- Clarifier
- Conduit
Modes of Interpreting:

- **Consecutive** – interpreter relays a message in a sequential manner after the speaker has paused or has completed a thought.

- **Simultaneous** – converting a speaker’s message into another language while the speaker continues to speak.

- **Sight Translation** – an interpreter reads a document written in one language and interprets it into a second language.
Before the meeting (pre-session):

Discuss with the interpreter:

- purpose of the meeting, your plans and expectations
- provide description of specific terms that might be used
- cultural issues that may come up
- go over any materials that will be used
- stress confidentiality and the need to avoid commenting on response, adding or changing the information

Be patient and prepared for additional time that will be required for interpretation
During the meeting:

- arrange the seating so that the interpreter can see and hear other participants at the meeting
- introduce everyone present at the meeting, including the interpreter, and explain his or her role
- speak directly to the client, *not* the interpreter
- speak with a moderate pace, and in relatively short segments
During the meeting:

• allow the interpreter time to explain some words or concepts that don’t exist in her language

• remember that interpreter interprets a meaning not words

• encourage the interpreter to ask questions and seek clarification from school personnel

• Have only one person speak at a time and avoid having side conversations
Avoid:

- professional jargon
- uncommon acronyms
- slang
- sentence fragments
- changing your ideas in the middle of a sentence
- asking multiple questions at one time
Acknowledge the interpreter as a professional

- The role of interpreter is to **facilitate understanding in communication** between people who do not speak a common language.

- Respect the interpreter’s role. Don’t ask interpreters to give rides to parents, help run errands, do your paperwork, etc.
Language Access for New Americans (LANA) aims to improve access to services for refugees and immigrants with limited English skills by improving the quality, affordability, and increasing the number of interpreting and translating services in Maine.

www.lanamaine.org
207.874.1000 ext. 311