

# 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)





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**SERVICES**

- Find an Interpreter
- Register as an Interpreter
- FAQ
- Submit Feedback



Steven Rowe, Attorney General of Maine thanked interpreters at the International Translation and Interpretation Day. He is pictured with Roya Hejajian, a Farsi interpreter from Portland.

**Directory of Freelance Interpreters**

Language Access for New Americans strives to maintain a database of best interpreters in Maine. Everyone in the directory had 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:

Availability:

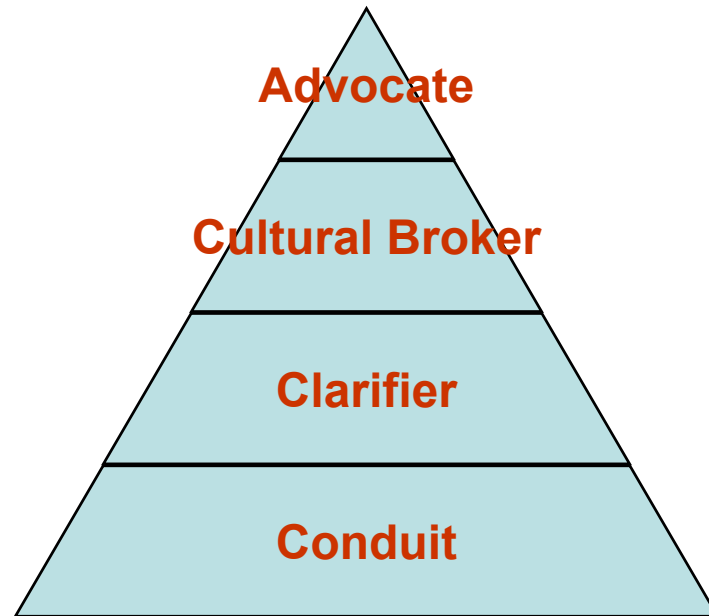
**Directory of Language Services Companies**

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

**Catholic Charities Maine [RISinterpret](#)**

Interpreting and translation services in more than 40 languages  
 Contact Person: Malvina Gregory  
 Phone Number: 207.523.2700

# Roles of Interpreter





# 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 in 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](http://www.lanamaine.org)  
207.874.1000 ext. 311

