



## Guidelines for Working with Interpreters

*“If it is 1 or 100 people who need interpretation, take it seriously. The interpretation is their only link to the conference or the educational event. The quality of the interpretation determines the quality of their experience.”*

*Donna Vukelich--interpreter*

The simultaneous interpretation equipment that is available in each UW Cooperative Extension district can be used both indoors and outdoors in a variety of ways:

- It can be used to help hard of hearing learners participate fully.
- It is critical when a teacher needs to talk very quietly.
- It allows people who speak different languages to hear a presentation at the same time as English language speakers.

The first two uses above do not require another person to interpret the program. It is only in the last example that you will be working with an interpreter who is bi-lingual. Interpretation equipment allows you to share what a speaker is saying with participants who speak a different language simultaneously or at the same time that the speaker is saying the words. This is different from interpreting the event by going consecutively or back and forth between the languages.

For example, with simultaneous interpretation, a presenter speaks in English while an interpreter talks into a small transmitter interpreting the presentation immediately into Spanish. The Spanish speakers hear the interpreted presentation with their small headsets and receivers. In this way, the English and Spanish speakers in the group hear the program at the same time in two different languages.

In this document we will be giving you tips on working with a bi-lingual interpreter.

### Things to arrange **BEFORE** an interpreted event:

1. **Reserve the equipment.** Find out where the equipment currently is in your district and reserve it for the date of your event. Arrange to pick it up. Set it up and try it out beforehand to be sure that you know how to use it.
2. **Choosing an interpreter.** Find an interpreter and be sure that he/she is trained as an interpreter. Many people are bilingual but this does not qualify that person to be an interpreter.
  - Interpreters should have specializations (medical, agriculture, judicial, business, etc)
  - Interpreters should be trained in **simultaneous interpretation** – speaking at the same time as the presenter -- or **consecutive interpretation**– repeating what the presenter says after the person has stopped speaking. If your event requires simultaneous interpretation, make sure the interpreters have previous experience and have used simultaneous interpretation equipment.

- Interpreters should conduct themselves appropriately. Interpreters do not advocate, change the message or add to or remove content from the message. Interpreters do not insert their own views/biases in the message. Your interpreter should let you know that he/she understands these important concepts.
  - If your program is over 2 hours long, you'll need to hire two interpreters so they can switch off every 20 minutes or so.
3. **Give important resources to your interpreter.** Provide interpreters with the following information as soon as possible:
- Handouts, speaker notes and PowerPoint presentations. The more information the interpreters have in advance, the more successful the interpretation will be. This will allow them to look up rare or technical words or phrases before the program.
  - Written names of speakers, sponsors, and people who will be acknowledged; also the speaker's biographical information.
  - The type of event they will be interpreting – outdoors, indoors, keynote or workshop.
  - The total number of participants and the number of people needing interpretation
  - Size of the rooms
  - If a sound system will be available. It is important to ensure that the interpreter can adequately hear what the speaker is saying. If you can get a direct audio feed and to the interpreter and provide him/her with headsets, that would be best.
- “The speaker has to be not just audible but VERY audible. I have to be able to hear over myself talking.” Steve Herrick -interpreter*
4. **Translate written materials.** Prepare the handouts and post-program surveys for all participants.
- Your interpreter may be willing to translate the handouts and post-program surveys as well as translate the results into English after the program is finished. Make the interpreter aware of this request ahead of time, as they will need adequate time to translate the materials. Include in the evaluation a place for the people who were listening to the interpretation to comment on the quality of the interpreter's work.
  - Plan well in advance for translation of written materials. Not all interpreters are competent translators nor do all interpreters enjoy translating. Translation requires a set of specialized skills so you may be hiring another person to do the translation.
  - Do not let the lack of translated written materials stop you from offering simultaneous interpretation at the event. Often, people who need verbal interpretation can read English well enough to use the handouts and answer a survey in English. They might also have another person translate the written materials for them. Remember to encourage all participants to fill out the session evaluation in their most fluent language.
  - Financial support for the translation of printed materials must come from program areas or local sources. The program areas will translate frequently and widely used materials, with recommendations for translation coming from program teams. Translation of

printed materials that are locally developed and need to be translated on an ad hoc basis should be supported locally.

5. **Tell guest speakers that their session will be interpreted.** Gently coach speakers on how to successfully work with interpreters.

- Suggest that they speak a little slower than usual.
- Suggest that they minimize the use of colloquialisms or sayings (Example... Doing this will result in you “shooting yourself in the foot”. ) Good interpreters will not interpret this literally but will interpret the speaker’s meaning instead. It would be easier for the interpreter if the speaker said straight away, “This will not work.”

*“It is really frustrating and difficult when speakers talk really fast or when they use long rambling sentences.” Steve Herrick-interpreter*

6. **Arrange payment for interpreters.** Interpreters should be paid fairly for their work. They should not work for free.

- Beginning November 1, 2008 and continuing for six months to one year, financial support for interpretation services will come from a central Cooperative Extension account. This will enable analysis of the need statewide and by program area.
- If the cost of the service is expected to be under \$500, hire the interpreter, ask for an invoice to be sent to you promptly, review the details of the invoice for accuracy, sign and date it, send it to JoAnn Hinz in the Office of the Dean and Director, UW-Extension, 432 n. Lake St., Madison, WI.
- If the cost of the service is expected to be over \$500, contact your program area director or associate director to discuss the project. If you decide to proceed, hire the interpreter, ask for an invoice to be sent to you promptly, review the details of the invoice for accuracy, sign and date it, send it to JoAnn Hinz in the Office of the Dean and Director, UW-Extension, 432 n. Lake St., Madison, WI.
- If the expected cost of combined sessions of your program is over \$5,000 discuss the project with your program area director or associate director. If you decide to proceed, contact JoAnn Hinz, who will direct the project through UW-Extension Purchasing.
- If interpreters charge mileage, the cost may not exceed the UW-Extension limit of \$.485 per mile. If they charge reimbursement for meals, those costs may not exceed the UW-Extension limits of \$8 for breakfast, \$9 for lunch and \$17 for dinner.

**Things to do DURING an interpreted event:**

1. **Carefully distribute the equipment.** Designate a committee member to be in charge of the interpretation equipment. It is not the interpreter’s job (unless they bring their own equipment) to hand out equipment and check batteries. Lay out the receivers near the registration table. Check that the batteries are working. Be sure that everyone signs out his/her particular receiver with name and phone contact information.

2. **Make space for the interpreter.** Try to arrange the space so that the interpreters are on the side or in the back of the room. As much as possible, keep them away from participants who do not need interpretation. If done well, simultaneous interpretation should not distract anyone.
3. **Support the interpreter.** Designate a committee member to be in charge of working with the interpreter(s).
  - Show the interpreter(s) where they will be sitting.
  - Make sure they have the session materials in both languages.
  - Introduce the interpreter to the speaker(s).
  - Throughout the event, continue to check with the interpreter. Do they have something to drink? Can they hear the speaker?
4. **Support the speaker.** Show the speaker where the interpreter will be sitting.
  - Ask that the speaker occasionally check-in visually with the interpreter about speed and clarity.
  - Encourage the speaker and interpreter to work out a signal so the speaker knows if he/she is speaking too quickly.
  - Tell them both that the interpreter may interrupt the speaker to say, “Interpreter requests clarification on a word.”
  - Remind the speaker that the interpreter will not be able to interpret when two individuals are speaking at the same time.

*“When two speakers talk at the same time, I just stop. It is not possible to interpret two people at one time. I just wait until the flurry of overlapping comments is over.” Steve Herrick, interpreter*
5. **Support the participants.** In your introductory remarks make all participants aware that interpretation is part of the program. Be sure to make the announcement in both (all) languages.

*“I have been at events where people thought that we were just chatting away impolitely in the back. They were understandably irritated because they didn’t realize that we were interpreting.” Donna Vukelich-interpreter*
6. **Plan for short breaks.** Interpreters should get a break every 20 minutes or so. They can only work for 2 hours by themselves.
  - There should be short breaks every 20 minutes if you have one interpreter. If the event is over 2 hours, you’ll need to hire two interpreters. For a two-day event, you’ll need three interpreters. Keep in mind that if you have multiple interpreters, the interpreters who are not interpreting are still paying attention and listening. They need to know what is going on during the program so they can take over.

*“I can do 1 ½ hours by myself but after 2 hours interpreting, I can’t speak English or Spanish!” Steve Herrick, interpreter*

### **Things to do AFTER an interpreted event:**

1. Pay the interpreter or tell the interpreter when s/he can expect payment.
2. Check the equipment to see that it is all properly returned and packaged.
3. Return the equipment to the appropriate office.
4. Submit a copy of the interpretation invoice to the program area as soon as possible after the event for payment.
5. Evaluate the use of interpretation for the program and problem-solve any issues that may have arisen. Share responses about the effectiveness of the interpretation with the interpreter.
6. Begin a list of qualified interpreters and/or interpretation agencies for future programs.

**Authors:** Joan Laurion, Dane County Family Living Educator and Rose Skora, Kenosha/Racine Agriculture Educator  
**Reviewer:** Jennifer Flamboe, Interpreter



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