



Dane County Department of Human Services In-person Interpretation Service Agreement

The Dane County Department of Human Services (DCDHS) is dedicated to providing Language Access Services to all Dane County residents with limited English proficiency.

To ensure efficient and accurate interpreting services, DCDHS has identified and developed standard best-practice guidelines for staff and clients to acknowledge and follow during all in-person appointments when working with a qualified interpreter.

- **Direct communication with the client, not the interpreter.**
Use first-person language when talking to the client; the interpreter's role is to enable real-time communication between people who speak different languages or use sign language.
- **Use short sentences and phrases.**
Allow a pause after a phrase for the interpreter to convey the information to the visitor in their language. Avoid speaking at the same time as others, as the interpreter needs to focus on interpreting everything being said; it's hard to interpret when multiple conversations happen at once.
- **Everything you say will be interpreted.**
The interpreter will repeat everything both parties say, even if they are speaking to themselves or among themselves.
- **All interactions are confidential.**
The interpreter may take notes and must shred them after the interaction. Their notes serve as memory aids and tools for active listening, specifically for interpreting. They are not to be used as transcriptions or case notes for DCDHS staff or clients during the interactions.
- **Speak clearly and at a normal speed.**
The interpreter may need time to carefully organize and structure the sentence to ensure the client understands and accurately conveys the information. It is best practice to avoid long, complex, or overly detailed explanations, as they can lead to information loss during interpretation.
- **Remember the cultural differences that may affect communication.**
The interpreter might need to explain certain concepts to the client since not all languages have direct equivalents for every word. Be mindful of body language and cultural differences. Avoid using slang, regional expressions, profanity, complex vocabulary, acronyms, jokes, and proverbs.
- **Interpreters cannot be left alone with the client.**
To maintain neutrality and prevent conflicts of interest between the interpreter and the client, DCDHS staff must not leave the interpreter alone with the client in a separate room without a staff member present. If staff need to leave the room, the interpreter must accompany them without being prompted. Leaving and returning together reinforces to the client that the staff and interpreter are working as one coordinated team during the appointment.

Please sign your name to acknowledge that you have read and understood the Standard Practice Guideline: Working with Interpreters.

DCDHS Staff's Name / Date

Client's Name / Date

Interpreter's Name / Date

Please contact DCDHS Language Access hslanguageservices@danecounty.gov with any questions or concerns.