



SPOKEN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD:

- 1. Language Proficiency:** Interpreters must be proficient in the language (including dialect) spoken by the family, staff, and interventionist. This ensures accurate and understandable interpretation.
- 2. Cross-Cultural Competence:** Interpreters should be trained and experienced in cross-cultural communication. They need to understand the dynamics of collaborating as an interpreter and adhere to professional and ethical standards, including neutrality, accuracy, and confidentiality. For information about the ethics of a spoken language interpreter, visit: <https://naetisl.org/ethics-standards>
- 3. Field-Specific Knowledge:** Identify interpreters who are trained in the appropriate professional field, such as child development, family counseling, mental health, or early care and education. Familiarity with the field enables interpreters to accurately convey technical terms without altering the message's intent or substance.
- 4. Cultural Sensitivity:** Interpreters should be capable of understanding and appreciating the respective cultures of both parties and conveying subtle cultural nuances with tact and sensitivity. Some interpreters may also guide consultants and early care and education staff on intercultural communication.



AVOID POTENTIAL PITFALLS:

- Avoid collaborating with untrained bilingual friends or adult family members who may not be bound by confidentiality and may not fully understand the content's technical meaning.
- Do not ask bilingual children to interpret, especially for sensitive topics related to mental health or adult matters. For more information about the child interpreters and resources to empower families to support quality language access, visit: <https://naetisl.org/families->



EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION:

Preparing for the Early Childhood Interview:

- Meet with the interpreter beforehand and clarify the nature and purpose of the family interaction, content areas to be addressed, and who will participate in the interview. Share only relevant information to minimize potential bias.
- Ensure the interpreter is familiar with any technical terms and special content that will be part of the consultation.
- Share any assessments, questionnaires or documents that will be presented to the family. Having this information prior to the interview, will give the interpreter the opportunity to ask relevant questions.
- Ask the interpreter to share any culture-specific verbal and non-verbal communication practices relevant to support a respectful and successful initial contact. Keep in mind that interpreters are not experts in every aspect of a family's cultural experience. However, they can provide general insight on language and cultural aspects that may relate to communication.



Engaging in the Early Childhood Interview:

- Ensure there is time for the interpreter to establish rapport with the family. Although all questions should be directed to you and not the interpreter, this small talk prior to a meeting can help families feel at ease and support open communication.
- Address your remarks and questions directly to the family, not the interpreter. Pay attention to nonverbal cues.
- Use a positive tone and convey respect and interest in a calm, unhurried manner. Be aware of your body language as a smile and welcoming demeanor will go a long way.
- Speak clearly, pause for interpretation, and avoid jargon, abbreviations, excessive information, or complex instructions.
- Periodically check the family's understanding and the accuracy of interpretations by asking them to restate instructions in their own words.



Debriefing after the Early Childhood Interview:

- Meet with the interpreter to clarify any questions about family responses, verbal and nonverbal exchanges, cultural issues, or future planning.
- Discuss the interpretation process and ways to improve future interactions.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATIONAL TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS OF SPOKEN LANGUAGES

BEST PRACTICES FOR SPOKEN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS IN

EARLY CHILDHOOD

TRANSLATORS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD:



- 1. Language Proficiency:** Translators must be proficient in the language(s), including dialects, spoken by the families and interventionists to ensure accurate and understandable translation of written materials.
- 2. Field-Specific Knowledge:** Choose translators with training in relevant fields like child development, family counseling, mental health, or early care and education. This ensures accurate translation of technical terms without altering the message's intent.
- 3. User-Friendly Translation:** Translators should be experienced collaborating with early childhood specialists to translate materials into a user-friendly format, especially for those with lower literacy skills. This may include engaging in conversations with document authors to ensure content is at an appropriate reading level and review the English version of the document to eliminate acronyms and jargon prior to starting the translation process.

EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

Determining the Focus and Audience of Translated Materials:

- Consider the purpose and audience of written materials and decide what information to convey, ensuring relevance to the audience's cultural preferences and literacy levels.

Determining the Mode of Delivery:

- Consult with community agencies that work with the intended audience, translators and interpreters to choose culturally and linguistically appropriate formats and modes of delivery that suit the information being conveyed.



Having a Review Process in Place:

- Ensure the translated materials maintain "dynamic equivalence," conveying the same meaning, not just the same words.
- Collaborate with families, staff, and community partners to review translations, ensuring they are understandable, relevant, credible, and culturally acceptable.
- Consider feedback from translators and community agencies that work with the intended audience about images and graphics used in the translated document.

By following these best practices, spoken language interpreters and translators can play a pivotal role in facilitating effective communication and understanding in early childhood settings, ultimately benefiting children and their families. For additional resources and best practices for spoken language interpreters and translators, visit:

<https://naetisl.org/best-practices>



NAETISL is a nonprofit organization that connects educators, spoken language interpreters, translators and emergent bilingual families with research-based information and resources related to language access and equity of communication in early childhood and K-12 settings. Our organization works in collaboration with stakeholders to establish standards and best practices for spoken language interpreters and translators, listens to linguistically diverse families who collaborate with interpreters, and develops quality professional development to enhance the skills of those who support equity in communication in our schools.

Resources:

Brookes (2023). *10 Tips for Culturally Responsive Planning Meetings with Families*. Adapted from Developing Cross-Cultural Competence, edited by Eleanor W. Lynch & Marci J. Hanson.

<https://brookespublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/10-tips-for-culturally-responsive-planning.pdf>

Hepburn, K. (2004). *Building Culturally & Linguistically Competent Services to Support Young Children, Their Families, and School Readiness*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Available online at www.aecf.org

Trango, J.C. (2012). *Statewide Disabilities and Mental Health Coordinator*. Chicanos Por La Causa Early Childhood Development Programs. Personal communication.

Suggested Handouts for Interpreter Training in Early Childhood:



- [Briefing sessions - EITP \(University of Illinois\)](#)
- [Consecutive Interpreting Roleplay - EITP \(University of Illinois\)](#)
- [Positioning Tips - EITP \(University of Illinois\)](#)
- [Meeting tips - EITP \(University of Illinois\)](#)
- [Role of the Interpreter - EITP \(University of Illinois\)](#)
- [Tips for Family Visits - EITP \(University of Illinois\)](#)

