

Interpreters and Bilingual Staff

Although people with moderate English skills may appear to understand discussions, use of professional interpreters to communicate complex information is advisable. For many professionals the need to work with interpreters may seem awkward and time consuming, but effective use of interpreting services leads to successful communication. The role of bilingual staff is distinctly different from that of an interpreter or translator. The fact that a worker speaks Polish does not mean that he/she is able to accurately convey messages of complex nature between clients and service providers. Although very valuable on a daily basis, the language assistance of a bilingual worker should be limited to simple matters, in order to avoid possible misunderstandings and complications of a legal nature.

Service providers are encouraged to deal only with accredited interpreters and translators. The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) tests and accredits translators and interpreters, at different levels and in most languages. These professionals may work in interpreting and translating assignments as independent (freelance) specialists, or under contract to a commercial or government agency.

Work of Translators and Interpreters is codified by the AUSIT Code of Ethics which obliges members to:

- respect their clients' rights to privacy and confidentiality;
- decline to undertake work beyond their competence or accreditation levels;
- decline to mix promotional activity for clients with interpreting or translation work;
- maintain professional detachment, impartiality and objectivity.

Information shared in interpreting and translating assignments is strictly confidential. Disclosure of information may be permissible with clients' agreement or when disclosure is mandated by law. Interpreters are required to observe impartiality in all professional contracts, disclose any possible conflict of interest and take all reasonable care to be accurate.

Interpreters and translators are not responsible for what clients say or write, they cannot voice an opinion, solicited or unsolicited, on any matter or person in relation to an assignment. For example, it is wrong to ask of an interpreter: "Does this person seem depressed to you?" because this kind of assessment would be outside of their area of expertise. In order to ensure the same access to all that is said by all parties involved in a meeting, interpreters relay accurately and completely everything that is said. They convey the whole message, including derogatory or vulgar remarks, as well as non-verbal clues and they cannot alter, make additions to, or omit anything from their assigned work.

In general, interpreters are not allowed to accept gifts and tips. However, some discretionary latitude may be exercised in accepting a gift such a small box of chocolates as a token of gratitude.

