

# Working with Interpreters for EL Families in a School Setting

Schools can use interpreters in a face-to-face or telephonic manner to ensure compliance with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended through PL 115-224 the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2018.

## Options for Interpreter Services:

- Face-to-face interpreters can help to build relationships with families and schools. Using the same interpreter over time can help speed up meetings by avoiding some of the explaining that is needed for families to better understand how American schools work. Face-to-face interpreters may need additional training to better interpret school jargon. Face-to-face interpreters (especially in small communities) sometimes have a conflict of interest and can have difficult schedules to work around. Face-to-face interpreters need to have a signed agreement on file with each school district. Some interpreters require a minimum of one hour pay regardless of the amount of time needed. For example, a 5 minute phone call or 50 minute meeting may cost the school the same amount of money.
- Telephonic interpreters can be arranged with businesses such as AT&T Language Line or Voiance. These services require a contract with a school district and typically have a charge for the first minute and a different charge for each minute after the first.

## Scheduling

- Consider choosing a contact person within the school to serve as a resource for educators looking to use interpreters. This person should understand the federal requirements as well as the knowledge and authority over the budget.
- Meetings using interpreters can take twice as long for interpreting and explaining various elements of the school that may be new for families.
- Consider sending a reminder to the interpreters, staff involved and parents the day before the meeting and possibly the morning of the meeting.

## During the Meeting

- Ask the interpreter sit next to the parents. Remind staff that when they are speaking that they should look at the parents and not the interpreter. This may seem uncomfortable at first, and a good start would be to try to look back and forth between the interpreter and parents. Best practice is to look at the parents when speaking.
- Start the meeting with introductions and state the purpose for the meeting. During this time, get a feel for how much information the interpreter can manage. Some interpreters like to interpret after each sentence and others like to hear a few sentences on the topic before they switch to the parents' preferred language.
- Skilled interpreters who are familiar with the native culture may take extra time to explain a concept that is unfamiliar. This may take longer than the one or two sentences that you have spoken. There may even be an exchange back and forth between the parents and interpreters to ensure that the parents are comprehending the information.

## After the Meeting

- The school staff should decide if anything needs to be translated into a written format in the parents preferred language.
- It is recommended that reimbursement forms are available at the conclusion of the meeting. Since some schools also cut checks only once a month, explain the expected payment timeframe to the interpreter.

## Written Translation

- Determine which modality the family prefers. Some families are not literate in their first language and the person who helps them with their mail only read in English. Be sure to ask parents for their preference before assuming that they want documents translated.
- Determine which documents are legal or essential (field trip forms, handbook release info, IEPs, etc.) and need to be translated.
- Not all interpreters can do written translations. Double check that any written translations are accurate with members of that language community.
- Most written translators charge by the page. Some may charge by the hour.

**Tools and resources for ensuring meaningful communications with Limited English Proficient Parents**

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/chap10.pdf>



### **1 112(e)(3)(C) PARENTAL PARTICIPATION**

(i) IN GENERAL.—Each local educational agency receiving funds under this part shall implement an effective means of outreach to parents of English learners to inform the parents regarding how the parents can—

- (I) be involved in the education of their children; and
- (II) be active participants in assisting their children to—
  - (aa) attain English proficiency;
  - (bb) achieve at high levels within a well rounded education; and
  - (cc) meet the challenging State academic standards expected of all students.

(ii) REGULAR MEETINGS.—Implementing an effective means of outreach to parents under clause (i) shall include holding, and sending notice of opportunities for, regular meetings for the purpose of formulating and responding to recommendations from parents of students assisted under this part or title III.

### **1112(e)(3)(D) BASIS FOR ADMISSION OR EXCLUSION**

A student shall not be admitted to, or excluded from, any federally assisted education program on the basis of a surname or language-minority status.

### **1112(e)(3)(A)(3) LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION**

(A) NOTICE.—Each local educational agency using funds under this part or title III to provide a language instruction educational program as determined under title III shall, not later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year, inform parents of an English learner identified for participation or participating in such a program, of—

- (i) the reasons for the identification of their child as an English learner and in need of placement in a language instruction educational program;
- (ii) the child’s level of English proficiency, how such level was assessed, and the status of the child’s academic achievement;
- (iii) the methods of instruction used in the program in which their child is, or will be, participating and the methods of instruction used in other available programs, including how such programs differ in content, instructional goals, and the use of English and a native language in instruction;
- (iv) how the program in which their child is, or will be, participating will meet the educational strengths and needs of their child;
- (v) how such program will specifically help their child learn English and meet age-appropriate academic achievement standards for grade promotion and graduation;
- (vi) the specific exit requirements for the program, including the expected rate of transition from such program into classrooms that are not tailored for English learners, and the expected rate of graduation from high school (including four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates and extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rates for such program) if funds under this part are used for children in high schools;
- (vii) in the case of a child with a disability, how such program meets the objectives of the individualized education program of the child, as described in section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)); and
- (viii) information pertaining to parental rights that includes written guidance—
  - (I) detailing the right that parents have to have their child immediately removed from such program upon their request;
  - (II) detailing the options that parents have to decline to enroll their child in such program or to choose another program or method of instruction, if available; and
  - (III) assisting parents in selecting among various programs and methods of instruction, if more than 1 program or method is offered by the eligible entity.

**1112(e)(4) NOTICE AND FORMAT.**—The notice and information provided to parents under this subsection shall be in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, provided in a language that the parents can understand.