

PROFESSIONAL INTERPRETER SERVICES

BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR THE CANTERBURY HEALTH SYSTEM

BACKGROUND

In Aotearoa New Zealand the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights, or The Code, gives consumers of health and disability services the right to be told things in a way that they understand, to communicate with providers and make informed choices about their health.

These best practice guidelines are for Canterbury health system clinicians, non-clinical staff and organisations to use when they provide health and disability services to people for whom New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) is a first or preferred language and people for whom English is not their first language who have limited English proficiency.

The use of best practice guidelines will contribute to:

- improving access to health services and equity of health outcomes for people for whom NZSL is a first or preferred language and people for whom English is not their first language who have limited English proficiency;
- protecting the rights of people who use NZSL;
- reducing clinical risk due to language barriers;
- protecting the privacy of people accessing professional interpreter services for health and disability services in Canterbury;
- improving the quality of the experience of people, clinicians, support staff and professional interpreters as they interact within the Canterbury health system.



ACROSS THE CANTERBURY HEALTH SYSTEM WE WILL:

- not use minors aged 17 years or younger;
- use professional interpreters who are trained and assessed, follow a code of ethics to ensure their service is confidential, impartial and professional, are contracted or employed and receive ongoing professional development;
- use non-professional interpreters only in clinical emergencies until a professional interpreter is organised;
- use professional interpreters for obtaining informed consent, providing information about a diagnosis or a treatment plan, fertility and family planning, sexual, mental health or other personal conversations;
- make professional interpreter services free to eligible consumers and easy to access by clinicians and support staff.

OUR EXPECTATIONS ARE...

Clinicians, administrators and support staff will:

- know how to access and use professional interpreter services;
- assess and document language and communication needs in practice management, including if they need an interpreter, in booking and referral systems;
- not use minors aged 17 years or younger or non-professional interpreters unless in a clinical emergency;
- use professional interpreters for obtaining informed consent, providing information about a diagnosis or a treatment plan, fertility and family planning, sexual, mental health or other personal conversations;
- not use bilingual staff or students outside of their professional scope;
- not use professional interpreters outside their professional scope.





Health services will:

- provide professional interpreter services free of charge to eligible patients/service users;
- provide a choice of professional interpreter services (e.g. face-to-face, phone or video interpreting, with cultural safety considerations including offering interpreters of different genders) to address patients' needs, with a preference for face-to-face service delivery whenever possible;
- ensure the privacy, confidentiality and cultural safety of consumers is maintained in all processes involved in booking and using professional interpreters services;
- provide accurate and up-to-date information about how to access professional interpreter services for staff and consumers;
- train clinicians, administrative and support staff to communicate with people for whom NZSL is a first or preferred language and people for whom English is not their first language who have limited English proficiency; including booking and working with professional interpreters, understanding and managing privacy, confidentiality, ethical and cultural safety aspects and working in a clinical setting;
- provide clinicians, administrative, support staff and consumers with accessible feedback systems to contribute to the evaluation and continuous improvement of professional interpreter services.

Health organisations, planners and funders will:

- agree on minimum standards for qualifications to work as professional interpreters in the Canterbury health system;
- agree on a common set of criteria to guide the definition of a professional interpreter;
- use current Ministry of Health data collection guidelines to collect and analyse user and workforce ethnicity and language data;
- use data to assess the need for and the utilisation and effectiveness of professional interpreter services and ensure services are culturally responsive and accessible to people for whom NZSL is a first or preferred language and people for whom English is not their first language who have limited English proficiency;
- plan, budget and appropriately resource professional interpreter services across all Canterbury publicly funded health services, including primary, secondary and community-based services delivered by contracted providers, so that the professional interpreter service follows consumers seamlessly across different services;



- provide health services with IT tools that support easy access to booking, use, evaluation and continuous improvement of professional interpreter services;
- evaluate and continuously improve professional interpreter services in collaboration with consumers, health services and professional interpreter service providers;
- collaborate with interpreter services providers and tertiary institutions to plan the development of a sustainable interpreter workforce with career pathways for professional interpreters;
- partner with local, regional and national health organisations to ensure equity, quality and cost efficiency of interpreter services;
- encourage linguistic diversity in employment at all levels of all organisations.

- Community HealthPathways: canterbury.communityhealthpathways.org/29346
- Hospital HealthPathways: canterbury.hospitalhealthpathways.org/29346
- CDHB Interpreter Services: interpreterbookings@cdhb.health.nz
- Human Rights Commission, Te Kāhui Tika Tangata: hrc.co.nz
- Healthinfo Canterbury/ Waitaha: healthinfo.org.nz