

The Bicultural Inclusion Support Services (BISS) team at GoodRun Solutions has researched the information provided in this publication through the referenced sources. The materials have been developed to supplement BISS strategies.

Assessing the need for an Interpreter

Effective communication between child care services and families/carers is essential to delivering high quality programs that meet the needs of Australia's diverse population.

Interpreting and translating assistance can make child care services more accessible to people who may have limited competency in the English language, such as Indigenous people and people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. This assistance is an important way to improve interaction and engagement with all families accessing child care services.

This information sheet provides you with a framework for assessing if translated materials or interpreting services are required to facilitate the enrolment process.

What does an interpreter do?

An interpreter conveys an oral or signed message or statement from one language into another with accuracy and objectivity to enable communication between two parties who use different languages.

(The Western Australian Languages Services Policy 2008)

An Interpreter is engaged in a three-way communication: they communicate in English and another language between two or more parties to facilitate simple communication in their non-occupational role.

(Victorian Multicultural Commission; Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health 2008)

When can an interpreter help with enrolment and communication?

- When families/ carers wanting to access your child care service are unable to communicate effectively in English
- When no other person acceptable to both parties, who is able to facilitate communication between the family/carer and your service is available
- When no translated materials facilitating the enrolment of a child into your service is available in a language that the family/carer is literate in
- When you have concerns that information required for the safe and appropriate care and education has not been communicated or communicated to the level required

How do I know if an interpreter is required?

It is not always easy to determine how much someone can understand – this applies to the family/carer and potentially to the person they have brought along to help them communicate.

Some tips to support your initial communication with persons whose first language is not English:

- Speak clear and plain English
- Give time for responses (30 seconds is not unusual)
- If you do not receive a response this may indicate that the question has not been understood and you may:
 - repeat the question
 - ask the person to repeat the question
- If the person cannot respond to or repeat the question an interpreters assistance may be required

The following questions support you to determine the language competency of persons who speak English as their second language:

- Do you want or need an interpreter?

Note: *Even if the answer is NO continue to assess the need for an interpreter by asking questions such as:*

- Can you tell me where you were born?
- Have you ever accessed child care services for your child/-ren?
- How long ago did you move to Perth?
- Are you satisfied that we can go ahead in English or do you think we need an interpreter?

Note: *Even if the family/carer answers all the questions there is no guarantee that their level of English is sufficient to facilitate the appropriate enrolment of the child/-ren*

What to do if additional support is required to facilitate the enrolment process?

- Check if translated materials are available in the preferred language
- Call your Inclusion Support Facilitator to start the development of a Service Support Plan (SSP)
- Contact BISS to arrange the interpreter for the date of enrolment

Translated materials relating to enrolment information are available from the following websites:

- http://www.ncac.gov.au/resources/family_factsheets_translations.asp
translated NCAC factsheets for families
- <http://www.directions.org.au/index.php?/wecome-to-childcare-translations.html>
'Welcome to Child Care Handbook' in 15 languages
- <http://www.fka.com.au/Enrolment/Enrolment.htm>
translated enrolment forms
- <http://www.eccfcsc.org/content/translated-materials-about-childrens-services-parents>
translated brochures with information on child care services

References:

- http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/publications/Languages/language_services_2008.pdf (accessed 24/04/09)
- http://ceh.org.au/downloads/ass_need_interpreter.pdf (accessed 24/04/09)