



Language Access — Interpreter Protocol and "I Speak" Card

How to work with an interpreter, when a family member may not be used, and a point-to-your-language card for reception

The rule

Situation	Interpreter
Any clinical consultation, consent, results, discharge instructions	Professional interpreter — in person, or by phone/video. Never a child. Never a family member for consent, safeguarding, mental health, sexual health, or bad news.
Reception, directions, appointment booking	Bilingual staff, "I speak" card, translated signage, phone line
Emergency, no interpreter reachable	Family or bilingual staff to establish the immediate problem; professional interpreter as soon as possible; document why
Written information	Translated leaflets where available; otherwise interpreter reads through; never rely on machine translation alone for clinical content

Working with the interpreter — six habits

1. Brief the interpreter first: purpose, sensitive topics, whether bad news is coming.
2. Sit in a triangle; speak to the patient, not the interpreter; use first person ("How are you?", not "Ask her how she is").
3. Short sentences; pause; avoid idioms and jargon.
4. Check understanding with teach-back through the interpreter.
5. Allow time: an interpreted consultation takes twice as long. Book it.
6. Debrief the interpreter after a distressing session; record the interpreter's name and the mode in the notes.

"I speak" card — point to your language

ქართული — Georgian	English	Русский — Russian	Українська — Ukrainian
العربية — Arabic	فارسی — Farsi / Dari	Türkçe — Turkish	Azərbaycan — Azerbaijani
Հայերեն — Armenian	اردو — Urdu	Français — French	Español — Spanish
中文 — Chinese	हिन्दी — Hindi	Soomaali — Somali	Tigrinya — ትግርኛ
Kurdî — Kurdish	پښتو — Pashto	Deutsch — German	Other: _____

Reception: show the card, note the language on the registration form, book the interpreter before the consultation. Add the languages of your own population.

ASF standards: Refugee & Migrant Health endorsement — language access (protocol displayed, interpreter use documented); Universal Floor — consent