

Working with a spoken-language interpreter

Book the right language and dialect, and brief the interpreter before the conversation. Speak to the person, use short sentences, and check understanding. Do not use a family member, a child, or a bilingual colleague pulled from their job as an interpreter.

Content

Before the conversation: specify the language, dialect, format, and any request for a gender-matched interpreter. Send materials in advance and allow enough time.

During the conversation: explain the interpreter's role, speak directly to the person in the first person, pause often, and avoid idioms. Check understanding by asking the person to describe the next step in their own words.

After the conversation: note any concerns the interpreter raised about terms or forms, and arrange for needed corrections.

For a vital conversation, use a qualified professional interpreter rather than a child, family member, untrained bilingual coworker, or machine translation.

Next steps

- **Language access checklist** — program page [/library/ja-language-access-checklist](#)
- **Community brief for the household's language** — program page [/minnesota-communities](#)

Practice paths this supports

- Policy, form, or notice change
- Community engagement or co-design effort