

Foreign Language Specialists, Inc.

MEDICAL INTERPRETER ROLE

The interpreter is a vital link in the process of communicating between the medical practitioner and the patient. The interpreter's role is to clearly, closely and concisely convey the needs of the practitioner to the patient, within the framework of the culture needs to the patient, convey the medical problems and concerns to the practitioner. The interpreter must understand medical terminology, procedures, and convey them to the patient within a cultural environment that the patient will understand. The effectiveness of the interpreter's ability to communicate is essential to the health and safety of the patient.

As a professional, the medical interpreter has a duty to act professionally at all times. Foreign Language Specialists, Inc. interpreters are expected to be professional, reliable, and responsible. We expect that our interpreters will be on time and appropriately dressed for every assignment. They must always be courteous and polite to both the patient and the hospital/clinic staff. It is very important that they listen carefully and pay close attention to what the doctor and patient is saying.

Like other professionals, interpreters must be aware of and follow ethical rules. These rules regulate their behavior and define their relationship to both the medical practitioner and patient. These rules must always address issues like conflict of interest, neutrality, and confidentiality of information and professional demeanor.

In addition to the specific ethical issues facing interpreters, there are many ethical issues in the medical profession in general which alter the ability of the medical interpreter to effectively perform their communication functions. These overriding issues include: abortion, birth control, drugs, genetics, and the right to die. Many times the underlying controversy is complicated even more by the cultural beliefs and practices of the patient to interpreter. It is of the utmost importance that interpreters understand and effectively deal with these issues.

The most important duty of the medical interpreter is to perform their function with compassion and humanity. A basic understanding of human needs and emotions along with strong sense of community service and participation are essential to providing the best possible interpretation service.