

# Phone Interpretation

## Communicate with parents in over 170 languages!

### How does phone interpretation work?

Your school or district can establish an account with a phone interpretation service. Your school or district is only billed for the services you use, and there is no monthly fee.

Once the account is set up, users can access phone interpreters twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year. No prior appointment is needed. The phone interpretation service can even listen and identify the language that the parent is speaking.

With a phone interpretation service, staff members can directly call families who do not speak English with an interpreter on the phone. This service can also be used to conduct in-person conferences with parents at the school site and the interpreter on speaker phone.

### Why is interpretation important?

Communication between parents and school staff is essential, both to the academic success of the student and to the everyday business of enrollment, scheduling, conferences and attendance. Interpretation is especially important in high-stakes situations, such as discipline, truancy and individualized education program (IEP) meetings. Availability of on-demand interpretation is vital in an emergency situation.

It can be cost-prohibitive to pay for written translations into languages that represent a small percentage of the student population, and written translations do not reach parents who are unable to read their native language.

### How can I work effectively with a phone interpreter?

- Listen carefully both for what is being said and what is not being said. Always check for understanding.
- Before beginning the interpretation process, brief the interpreter about the nature of your call.
- Speak directly with the parent and let the interpreter serve as your voice (e.g. don't speak to the interpreter about the parent, just speak to the parent).
- Speak in your natural voice, not more slowly or loudly than usual.
- Pause after each thought so that the interpreter can interpret one complete thought at a time. Coach the parent to do the same.
- Check for the parent's understanding as you go along.
- Avoid using technical terms that require a lot of explanation.
- Expect the conversation to go on twice as long as it would without interpretation.
- Initiate the closing of the call, and thank the interpreter for their efforts once completed.
- If a particular interpreter worked especially well with you and the parent, ask for their ID number so that you can request to work with them on future calls.

### Phone interpretation vendors on contract with the state of Washington:

#### CTS Language Link

[www.ctslanguageink.com/opi.php](http://www.ctslanguageink.com/opi.php)  
(360) 433-0437

\$0.82 per minute

#### Language Line

<http://languageine.com>  
(408) 983-1321

\$0.98 per minute

#### Pacific Interpreters, Inc.

<http://pacificinterpreters.com>  
(503) 445-5642

\$0.86 per minute

Prices granted to state agencies, including schools and school districts.

