

## Appropriate Use of Interpreters

### **Selecting an Interpreter**

- “At a minimum, the interpreter should be equally fluent in English and the native language of the student or parent.” (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005, p. 92).
- According to Langdon (1994), “Interpreters should have a minimum of a high school diploma and communication skills that are adequate for the tasks assigned by the professional.” (as cited in Rhodes et al., 2005, p. 93).
- The student and parents’ friends and family members should not serve as interpreters due to issues related to confidentiality (Rhodes et al., 2005).
- Other recommended skills and training include cultural expertise and knowledge of educational terms (Rhodes et al., 2005). “The Use of Interpreters in the Assessment Process and School-Based Practice”, chapter six of the book *Assessing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: A Practical Guide* by Rhodes, Ochoa and Ortiz, provides more information regarding recommended skills and training of interpreters.

### **Testing**

#### *Norm-referenced Tests*

- When working with ELL students, according to Lopez (2008), “school psychologists should primarily use tests with validated translations and /or nonverbal cognitive tools that do not need translation.” (p.1756) In “Best Practices in Working with School Interpreters”, Chapter 110 of *Best Practices in School Psychology V*, Lopez discusses how using interpreters to translate tests may affect the validity of the results obtained (Lopez, 2008).
- In chapter 11 of the book, *Assessing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: A Practical Guide*, the authors discuss the “Ochoa and Ortiz Multidimensional Assessment Model for Bilingual Individuals.” This model identifies the recommended modes of assessment depending on an individual’s current grade level, “the current and previous types of educational program; and the individual’s current degree of language proficiency in both English and the native language.” (Rhodes et al., 2005, p. 169).

#### *Informal Assessment Tools*

- In chapter 110 of *Best Practices in School Psychology V*, Lopez also discusses challenges related to the interpretation process when using informal assessment tools (Lopez, 2008).

### **Working with Students and Families**

- Chapter 110 of *Best Practices in School Psychology V* discusses the recommended phases when working with interpreters including the briefing phase, active phase, and the debriefing phase (Lopez, 2008, p. 1761). This chapter also identifies important questions for school psychologists to consider after the interpretation session, to help better evaluate the information that was gathered (Lopez, 2008, p. 1763).
- In chapter six of the book, *Assessing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: A Practical Guide*, Rhodes et al. provides a list of recommendations to help improve the interpretation process (Rhodes et al., 2005, p. 97).
- The article, “Involving Immigrant Parents of Students with Disabilities in the Educational Process” (2002), by Al-Hassan and Gardner, in the journal *TEACHING Exceptional Children* is a good resource which provides information related to home-school collaboration.

### **Translating Educational Documents**

- The procedural safeguards notice, *Whose IDEA is this?* has been translated into 10 different languages including “Albanian, Arabic, Chinese (simplified), Chinese (traditional), Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Somali, Ukrainian and Vietnamese” (ODE, 2010, p.1), and is available on the ODE website under Learning Supports, Students with Disabilities, and Laws, Policies, and Performance at <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=968&ContentID=11128&Content=91971>
  - According to the Ohio Department of Education (2011b):

If *Whose IDEA Is This?* has not been translated into the parents' native language, the school district arranges (if such translation services are available) to have this procedural safeguards notice translated. If it is clearly not feasible to provide the parent with a written translation of the notice, the school district should make arrangements for a bilingual interpreter, who speaks the parents’ language, to meet with the parents to explain the notice at a mutually agreed upon time and place. (p. 4)
- According to the Ohio Department of Education (2011a), the same procedure listed above also applies to the Prior Written Notice PR-O1 form.
- The Hamilton County Educational Service Center has provided a helpful handout detailing the appropriate procedures to follow regarding documentation when working with non-English speaking families, according to the Operating Standards for Ohio’s Schools Serving Children with Disabilities. This handout is titled, “Providing Special Education Documents to Parents Who Do Not Speak English: Required Practices and

Culturally Responsive Practices”, and can be accessed at the following link:

[http://www.hcesc.org/resources/Culturally%20Responsive%20Practice/CulturallyRespon  
s.pdf](http://www.hcesc.org/resources/Culturally%20Responsive%20Practice/CulturallyRespon<br/>s.pdf)

- The PACER Center (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights) offers translated materials in three different languages including Hmoob/Hmong, Soomaaliga/Somali, and Español/ Spanish. Some of the materials contain information which is specific to Minnesota residents; however, many of the materials may be helpful to non-residents as well (PACER Center, 2011; Al-Hassan & Gardner, 2002). The translated materials are available to order or download at <http://www.pacer.org/translations/>

## References

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