

Interpretation Services Guide

There are over 10,000 residents of St. Thomas and Elgin County whose first language is one other than English. While many residents can also communicate in English, this is not the case for everyone. Additionally, some clients may present with having higher levels of English comprehension than they actually have. For these reasons, language interpretation is critical for organizations to provide services equally to all clients—including immigrants, refugees, and citizens who may not be confident understanding or communicating in English.

This quick guide outlines why interpretation is important and provides information to help you understand what type of interpretation you need and what options are available in our community.

What's the difference between interpretation and translation?

Both interpretation and translation deal with converting information from one language to another so that someone can understand what is being communicated. The difference is that interpretation is spoken and delivered immediately. It is more concerned with understanding and communication than a perfect word-for-word match between languages. Translation is written and there is generally a delay in delivery, although some machine translation tools like Google Translate can perform translation very quickly.

Why is interpretation important?

Interpretation is important because service providers have a duty of care to ensure that clients can give informed consent and understand the information they are given. It also helps you, the service provider, accurately understand what a client is communicating, which helps you better serve them. This is especially important for critical or sensitive issues, such as medical or legal issues, where a misunderstanding could result in negative outcomes, higher risks, increased costs, loss of credibility and trust, or delays.

It is the responsibility of the organization to provide an interpretation service to ensure that the client understands what is being shared, discussed, or agreed upon. Let your clients know that interpretation is available; don't wait for them to request it.

What types of interpretation are available?

Interpretation can be categorized as either trained or informal.

Trained interpreters have specialized training in interpretation. They are covered by Errors and Omission insurance and adhere to a strict code of conduct and industry approved Standards of Practice. You generally have to pay for trained interpreters' services.

Informal interpreters do not have specialized training in interpretation. They include family, friends, and volunteer interpreters. It also includes machine translation, such as Google Translate. Often, these interpreters or translation services offer their services for free, and confidentiality is never guaranteed.

When should I use trained interpretation?

Generally, it is helpful to have a trained interpreter for longer conversations. Trained interpreters should be used for all medical, legal, and other situations that require informed consent, confidentiality, specialized terminology, or impartiality. It is particularly inappropriate to use a child to provide interpretation in critical situations. Your organization may also have a specific mandate or requirement to use trained interpretation.

When can I use informal interpretation?

Informal interpretation may be used in shorter and less critical or sensitive situations, such as orientation to bus services, shopping, communicating with neighbours etc. However, be aware that accuracy and confidentiality are never guaranteed with informal interpretation.

Why is it inappropriate to have children provide interpretation?

When children provide interpretation, accuracy cannot be guaranteed. It can also place undue responsibility on the child and cause a power imbalance within the family. It is particularly inappropriate to use a child to provide interpretation in critical situations, such as medical, legal, or financial conversations. This is a breach of privacy and confidentiality. There may be some short and informal situations where it isn't inappropriate for children to provide interpretation, such as interpreting a neighbour's greeting or a food label.

How does interpretation work?

Interpretation can be offered in a variety of formats: in-person, over the phone, or through video-call, or you can use machine translation (eg: Google Translate) with technology like a tablet or smartphone. It can be pre-scheduled or accessed on-demand, depending on the interpretation provider. Most interpretation is consecutive, which means that the information is interpreted after it has been given, not simultaneously. Simultaneous interpretation does exist, which means that the information is interpreted as it is given, but it is much less commonly used to interpret for clients accessing services. Each of these formats has benefits and drawbacks. You should choose the best interpretation format for your specific situation, considering, for example, cost, anonymity and confidentiality, length of the conversation, how common the language is, and how quickly you need the interpreter. Refer to the next section for specific information about interpretation services providers.

Usually, you will need to add extra time to an appointment where interpretation is used, because the interpretation process will increase the length of every interaction.

Here are some other tips for communicating with a client using interpretation:

- Before booking the interpreter, check to see if the client has any preferences that could be accommodated, eg: requesting an interpreter of a certain gender.
- At the beginning of the appointment, allow the interpreter to provide an introduction in both languages, eg: name, confidentiality information, etc.
- During the appointment, speak to the client, not the interpreter.
- Speak naturally.
- Throughout the appointment, check in with the client to ensure they are understanding.
- Confirm client understanding by asking them to reiterate what was said, not with a simple 'yes' or 'no'.
- Break information into small segments to allow for interpretation. Pause at the end of your sentences.

How much does interpretation cost?

Interpretation costs vary depending on type of interpretation. Pre-scheduled interpretation generally costs upwards of \$40/hour. In-person interpretation will likely also include additional travel costs. Remote, on-demand interpretation (eg: phone interpretation) can cost upwards of \$1.50/minute. Often informal and machine translation is available for free.

What's the difference between confidentiality and anonymity in the context of interpretation?

Confidentiality means that the information shared during an interpretation session will not be shared with anyone else. Anonymity means that the interpreter does not know the identity of the client. Clients may have different reasons why they want, or need, confidentiality and/or anonymity. Trained interpretation is always confidential, but it may not be anonymous. Particularly with in-person interpretation, the interpreter may even live in the same community as the client. Remote interpretation may allow for more anonymity.

What about interpretation for Low German Speaking Clients?

Low German is a very common language in the Elgin County area, spoken by Low German Mennonites. Low German is also called "Plautdietsch". So if you are requesting Low German interpretation, be sure to look for, or ask for, both names. Additionally, many Low German Speaking Mennonites will simply refer to their language as "German". If a client has request German interpretation, be sure to check if they mean standard German or if they mean Low German (Plautdietsch). (If you know your client is Low German Mennonite and they have requested German translation, they almost always will mean Low German.)

What interpretation services are available in St. Thomas-Elgin?

Across Languages Interpretation and Translation

920 Commissioners Rd. E., Unit 207
London, ON, N5Z 3J1
519-642-7247

- Primary provider of trained, in-person and phone interpretation in the Elgin-Middlesex-London area.
- In-person interpretation must be booked in advance. Scheduling will depend on interpreter availability.
- Also offers access to on-demand phone interpretation through the RIO network. A Client ID and Secured Access Code must be obtained from Across Languages to access the RIO network in this way.
- Offers interpretation for 180+ languages.

RIO (Remote Interpretation Ontario) Network

1-888-278-8007
languages@accessalliance.ca

- Offers on-demand and pre-scheduled, trained phone and video interpretation to service providers across Ontario.
- Collaboration between Canadian non-profit interpretation organizations to increase access to interpretation. Access through an interpretation partner (ie: Across Languages, WE Speak) or by contacting RIO directly.
- No minimum charges and toll-free number within North America; only pay for the interpretation itself.
- Offers interpretation in 230+ languages.

Cross-Cultural Learner Centre

505 Dundas St.
London, ON, N6B 1W4
519-432-1133
www.lcclc.org

- Offers trained, in-person interpretation.
- Interpreters are trained in medical interpretation.
- Offers interpretation in 80+ languages.
- In-person interpretation must be booked in advance. Scheduling will depend on interpreter availability.

Language Line

1-800-752-6096

www.languageline.com

- Offers on-demand, trained phone and video interpretation.
- Based in the USA.
- Access through the Language Line app or by phone.
- Offers interpretation in 240+ languages.

WE Speak

1-866-4-WE-SPEAK (1-866-493-7732)

oh-west_wespeak@ontariohealth.ca

www.workforcewindsoressex.com/wespeak

- Facilitates access to in-person, phone and video interpretation for medical service providers.
- Partnership between RIO Network and local interpretation service providers.
- Offers a centralized way to access trained on-demand or scheduled interpretation.
- Based in southwestern Ontario.
- Access through the Language Line InSight app or by phone. Need to register first to access.
- Offers discounted prices to service providers who are part of a bulk purchase plan.
- Offers Plautdietsch (Mennonite Low German).

Voyce

1-855-568-6509

www.web.voyceglobal.com

- Offers on-demand, trained, remote medical interpretation.
- Offers interpretation in 240+ languages.
- Access through the Voyce App or integration with other video messaging apps.

Mennonite Community Services

16 Talbot St. E.

Aylmer, ON, N5H 1H4

226-544-0380

www.mcson.org

- Offers Low German (Plautdietsch) interpretation for clients accessing their services (including settlement and employment services).
- Offers translation of documents (English to Low German and vice versa) in written or audio file format. Contact for prices.



Google Translate

www.translate.google.com

- Machine translation.
- Offers translation in 133 languages via text, and limited translation via photo, audio, and real-time video.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed since all data, uploaded images, and videos are available to Google.

Tarjimly

www.tarjim.ly

- Provides free, on-demand, informal, remote interpretation.
- Access through the Tarjimly app
- Connects you with an informal interpreter (average connection time is 90 seconds).
- Offers interpretation in 80+ languages. Wait times for connection to an interpreter may be longer for less common languages.