

# INTERPRETER CODE OF ETHICS

## **Confidentiality**

Interpreters must treat all information learned during the interpretation as confidential. Information shall only be shared on a "need to know" basis with other employees and service providers to the extent permitted by law. Interpreters shall not use confidential information acquired in the course of official duties, or request or gain access to confidential information maintained by KSDE, its contractors or providers, in order to further his or her own personal interests or the interests of a friend, relative or business associate.

## **Accuracy: Conveying the content and spirit of what is said**

Interpreters must transmit the message in a thorough and faithful manner, giving consideration to linguistic variation in both languages and conveying the tone and spirit of the original message. A word-for-word interpretation may not convey the intended idea. The interpreter must determine the relevant concept and say it in language that is readily understandable and culturally appropriate to the listener. In addition, the interpreter will make every effort to assure that the client has understood questions, instructions and other information transmitted by the service provider.

## **Completeness: Conveying everything that is said**

Interpreters must interpret everything that is said by all people in the interaction, without omitting, adding, condensing or changing anything. If the content to be interpreted might be perceived as offensive, insensitive or otherwise harmful to the dignity and well-being of the client, the interpreter should advise the KSDE worker, its contractors or providers, of this before interpreting. If interpreter is taking notes to aid in ensuring the complete message is relayed, notes will be destroyed immediately following the session.

## **Conveying cultural frameworks**

Interpreters shall explain cultural differences or practices to the KSDE staff person, its contractors and providers, and clients when appropriate.

## **Non-judgmental attitude about the content to be interpreted**

An interpreter's function is to facilitate communication. Interpreters are not responsible for what is said by anyone for whom they are interpreting. Even if the interpreter disagrees with what is said, thinks it is wrong, an untruth, or even immoral, the interpreter must suspend judgment, make no comment, and interpret everything accurately.

## **Client self-determination**

The interpreter may be asked by the client for his or her opinion. When this happens, the interpreter may provide or restate information that will assist the client in making his or her own decision. The interpreter will not influence the opinion of clients by telling them what action to take.

## **Attitude toward clients**

The interpreter should strive to develop a relationship of trust and respect at all times with the client by adopting a caring, attentive, yet discreet and impartial attitude toward the client, toward his or her questions, concerns and needs.

The interpreter shall treat each client equally with dignity and respect regardless of race, color, gender, religion, nationality, political persuasion or life-style choice.

**Adapted from:** The Cross Cultural Health Care Program (CCHCP) Medical Interpreter Code of Ethics. **Source:** This code is a compilation of KSDE's employee confidentiality agreement and the Codes of Ethics from the Hospital Interpretation Program in Seattle, WA; Boston City Hospital in Boston, MA; and the American Medical Interpreters and Translators Association (AMITAS) in Stanford, CA

## Acceptance of Assignments

If level of competency or personal sentiments make it difficult to abide by any of the above conditions, the interpreter shall decline or withdraw from the assignment.

Interpreters should disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest that could affect their objectivity. For example, interpreters should refrain from providing services to family members or close personal friends except in emergencies. In personal relationships, it is difficult to remain unbiased or non-judgmental.

In emergency situations, interpreters may be asked to do interpretations for which they are not qualified. The interpreter may consent only as long as all parties understand the limitations and no other, better qualified, interpreter is available.

## Compensation

The fee agreed upon by KSDE, its contractors and providers, and the interpreter is the only compensation that the interpreter may accept. Interpreters will not accept additional money, considerations or favors for services reimbursed by KSDE, its contractors or providers. Interpreters will not use KSDE's, its contractors' or providers' time, facilities, equipment or supplies for private gain, nor will they use their positions to secure privileges or exemptions.

## Self-evaluation

Interpreters shall represent their certification(s), training and experience accurately and completely.

## Ethical violations

Interpreters shall withdraw immediately from encounters that they perceive to be in violation of the *Code of Ethics*.

## Professionalism

Interpreters shall be punctual, prepared and dressed in an appropriate manner. The trained interpreter is a professional who maintains professional behavior at all times while assisting clients and who seeks to further his or her knowledge and skills through continuing studies and training.

By signing this document, I am verifying that I have read, understand and agree to all the provisions listed in the above *Code of Ethics*.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interpreter agency or company:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Language(s) used

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

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