



Working with interpreting services for refugees and asylum seekers

Supporting the use of interpreting services when working with refugees and asylum seekers.



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For NSW Health

About this resource

This resource contains key information to support the use of interpreting services when working with refugees and asylum seekers. This resource also explores key concepts surrounding safe communications about mental illness and suicide.

USING THIS RESOURCE

The information in this resource is designed to support suicide prevention in refugees and asylum seekers. It is recommended that this information is used in conjunction with advice from health professionals and resources. A list of helpful resources is located at the end of this fact sheet.

TYPES OF INTERPRETING SERVICES

NSW Health Care Interpreting Services

NSW Health Care Interpreting Services provide access to professional interpreting services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, onsite and by telephone in over 120 languages, including Auslan. Only NSW Health practitioners can request interpreting assistance from this service and must be made at the request of the practitioner, not the client.

There are five Health Care Interpreter Services (HCIS) in NSW.

Health staff should contact these services first for any interpreting needs:

Western Sydney Local Health District

Phone: **02 9912 3800**

Coverage: Western Sydney LHD, Northern Sydney LHD, Nepean Blue Mountains LHD, the Children's Hospital Westmead and St Joseph's Hospital

South Western Sydney Local Health District

Phone: **02 8738 6088**

Coverage: South Western Sydney LHD

Sydney Local Health District

Phone: **02 9515 0030**

Email: **SLHD-Interpreters@health.nsw.gov.au**

Coverage: Sydney LHD, South Eastern Sydney LHD, St Vincent's (Darlinghurst), Sydney Children's Hospital (Randwick) and Justice Health and Forensic Medicine

Mental health and suicide translate very differently across cultures. It can be difficult to identify suicide risk if clients have limited English skills, low mental health literacy and different cultural beliefs or practices surrounding mental health.

Using an interpreting service can assist in improved communication between those providing care and clients of refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds.



Hunter New England Local Health District

Phone: **02 4924 6285**

Coverage: Hunter New England LHD, Central Coast LHD, Mid North Coast LHD, Northern LHD, Far West LHD and Western LHD

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District

Phone: **1800 247 272**

Coverage: Illawarra Shoalhaven LHD, Murrumbidgee LHD and Southern NSW LHD

TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING SERVICE (TIS NATIONAL)

TIS National is a general interpreting service that is available to all people in Australia, not specific to a health setting and is provided by the Department of Home Affairs. TIS National has access to over 2,300 contracted interpreters across Australia, speaking more than 140 different languages. People from non-English speaking backgrounds can contact this service if they need any interpreting or translating assistance.

To contact TIS National or for further information, please call **131 450** or visit **tisnational.gov.au**

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN USING INTERPRETING SERVICES

- Establish the clients preferred language to communicate and if they have a preference for an interpreter of a particular gender, ethnicity or age. List these preferences on their file if possible.
- Communication via an interpreter may be impacted by cultural differences between the client and the interpreter due to religion, experiences of torture or traumatic events.
- Be mindful when using an interpreter from a small community or language group for confidentiality reasons. Your client may wish to withhold their name or request an interpreter from a different state.
- Try to book the same interpreter when working with the client. This can help to build trust and rapport.
- Allow time to brief the interpreter on the nature and aim of the conversation.

- Avoid using metaphors, colloquialisms or idioms when communicating as this is unlikely to have a direct translation or could have different meanings for different cultures.
- Allow time to debrief with the interpreter to ensure a sensitive conversation has not negatively impacted on their wellbeing. The experiences of refugees and asylum seekers can be traumatic. It's important that interpreters and clients practice self-care and access support services as required.

For more information on using an interpreter safely and productively, please visit:

Australian Refugee Health Practice Guide:
refugeehealthguide.org.au

Further information

Translating and Interpreting Services National:
tisnational.gov.au | 131 450

Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors: startts.org.au

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre: asrc.org.au

NSW Transcultural Mental Health Centre:
dhi.health.nsw.gov.au/transcultural-mental-health-centre

NSW Health: health.nsw.gov.au/multicultural/Pages/health-care-interpreting-and-translating-services.aspx