

GUIDELINES FOR TELEPHONE INTERPRETING July 2010

General points:

- [please localize by describing how staff should get hold of the face to face and telephone interpreting services]
- When using telephone interpreting, please allow the interpreter to introduce himself/herself to the patient.
- The patient and the health care staff must speak loudly enough for the interpreter to hear. Turning up the volume control on the phone helps.
- Because the interpreter cannot see what is happening, he/she may not have the context to understand and interpret what is being said by the staff/patient. Describing the context helps the interpreter to visualize what is happening and communicate more effectively.
- At any point, if it is clear that phone interpreting is inappropriate for the visit, request a face-to-face interpreter.
- At all points, please note that these are guidelines rather than instructions.

Best Situations for Telephone Interpreting	Best Situations for Face to Face Interpreting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the matter is logistical or simple to explain, like scheduling an appointment • When the encounter will last less than 20 minutes • When a patient wants to convey something and cannot communicate with you • For focused conversations • When it is an urgent matter and you cannot wait for an interpreter to arrive in person • When you cannot have a face to face interpreter within 30 minutes • To return phone triage calls • For inpatient periodic pain assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the first appointment with a new patient • If it is a complicated or personal medical procedure • For a serious diagnosis • When the encounter will last more than 20 minutes • For any encounter that involves consents or health care proxies • For mental health encounters • For serious or bad news • For encounters that involve family discussion • For patient education • For confused patients, or hard of hearing • For patients or providers who are soft spoken or difficult to understand • For discharge instructions • For demos requiring visuals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is always the option of starting the encounter with telephone interpreting until an interpreter arrives in person. 	

Adapted with acknowledgement from original guidelines developed by Cambridge Health Alliance, Cambridge, MASS, USA