

# Helpful Tips for Navigating Healthcare Services with Language Assistance

## Tips for Quality Interpretation in Healthcare

### Request Early:



- **Before Your Visit:** Let your provider know you need an interpreter when you schedule your appointment. Specify which language you need to ensure the right services are arranged.

### Verify Credentials:



- **Qualified Interpreters:** Make sure the interpreter is trained and experienced in medical interpretation. They should understand medical terms and ethics to provide accurate translation.

### Prepare for Your Appointment:



- **Write It Down:** List your symptoms, questions, and concerns before your visit. This will help ensure you cover all important topics during your appointment.

### Use Simple Language:



- **Clear Communication:** Speak clearly and use straightforward language. Avoid medical jargon or slang to help the interpreter translate your words accurately.

### Speak to Your Provider:



- **Direct Communication:** Address your healthcare provider directly, not the interpreter. This keeps the focus on your relationship with the provider.

### Verify Understanding:



- **Confirm Information:** Repeat important details back to your provider to make sure you understand correctly. Ask the interpreter to clarify anything that's unclear.

### Ask Questions:



- **Get Clear Answers:** Don't hesitate to ask for more information if you don't understand something. Being fully informed is essential for making good health decisions.

## Respect Confidentiality:



- **Privacy:** Remember that qualified interpreters are trained to keep your information confidential and provide unbiased translation.

## Be Aware of Cultural Differences:



- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Be open about your cultural background if it helps the interpreter and provider understand your needs better.

## Express Cultural Preferences:



- **Specific Preferences:** If you have cultural or religious preferences, let your healthcare provider and interpreter know to ensure your needs are respected.

## What to Do If Denied an Interpreter

### Speak to a Supervisor:

- **Immediate Action:** If you are denied an interpreter, ask to speak with a supervisor or patient advocate at the healthcare facility. Explain that you are entitled to language services under the law.

### File a Complaint:

- **Internal:** File a complaint with the healthcare provider's patient relations department.
- **State Health Department:** Contact your state's health department to report the issue.
- **Office for Civil Rights (OCR):** You can also file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights.



### Contact Information:

- **Website:** [OCR Complaint Portal](#)
- **Phone:** 1-800-368-1019
- **Email:** [OCRMail@hhs.gov](mailto:OCRMail@hhs.gov)

### Document the Incident:

- **Record Details:** Write down the date, time, and names of the staff involved. Keep a record of the conversation and the reasons given for denying language services.

## Remember Your Rights

### Free Language Services:

- **No Cost:** Language assistance services, including interpreters and translated documents, are provided at no cost to you.

### Qualified Interpreters:

- **What You Deserve:** You have the right to a qualified interpreter to ensure accurate and confidential communication.

### Access to Translated Documents:

- **Important Papers:** Essential medical documents should be available in your preferred language to ensure you fully understand your care.

*By understanding your rights and how to use language services,  
you can ensure you receive the best possible healthcare,  
tailored to your language needs.*