



FIELD GUIDE TO HUMANITARIAN INTERPRETING & CULTURAL MEDIATION

- *Interpreters and Cultural Mediators: Key responsibilities, differences and similarities.*
- **Humanitarian Interpreting Do's and Don'ts**
- **Humanitarian Mediation Do's and Don'ts**
- *Working with interpreters & cultural mediators in a humanitarian setting - Best Practice*
- *Humanitarian Principles in Practice*
- *Resources*

HUMANITARIAN INTERPRETING

DO'S AND DON'TS

An interpreter translates verbal communication between two languages. An interpreter may provide an oral translation of a written document, i.e. sight interpretation, under exceptional circumstance, but does not provide written translations (this is the work of a translator).



Two-way proficiency: Do ensure you are proficient in the languages you translate from and into.



Do not seek to take advantage of information acquired during or as a result of your work.



Cultural competence: Do develop your knowledge of the cultures you are interpreting between. This is essential to relay information accurately.



Do not accept assignments that require knowledge or language or other skills beyond your competence.



Accuracy: Do convey information as accurately as possible. Relay messages between the parties without omission or distortion.



Do not interject personal opinions or counsel.



Neutrality: Do remain neutral with regard to gender, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc. If at any point you feel you cannot do so, you should withdraw from the assignment.



Do not attempt to exercise power or influence over your listeners.



Confidentiality: Do respect the confidentiality of the parties and their discussion at all times.



Do not disclose information gathered during the course of your assignments.



Use of resources: Do use the resources provided to you, including glossaries and reference material.



Do not use your position to gain favors from clients.



Do not accept an assignment when family or close personal relationships affect impartiality.



Do not interfere with the flow of communication between the parties.

HUMANITARIAN CULTURAL MEDIATION

DO'S AND DON'TS

A **cultural mediator facilitates mutual understanding** between a person or a group of people (e.g. the migrant/refugee population) and a caregiver (e.g. a doctor) by providing two-way verbal translation (interpreting) and helping them overcome cultural barriers.



Do interpret all that is said accurately and in full. "I'm telling you this but please don't translate" is not acceptable.



Do interpret words, and attitudes, in each language, and explain cultural differences or practices as needed.



Do give additional support aside from conveying information if requested. For example, you can help filling out forms.



Do correct yourself if you make a mistake and ask for clarification if there is something you don't understand.



Do respond to racist or abusive language by highlighting its offensiveness with the speaker and checking that is what they want to say before interpreting it. Report this behavior to their supervisor afterwards.



Do use all resources available, like glossaries or reference material, to improve your understanding and knowledge.



Do ensure that your appearance is appropriate and adapted to the context (decent and neutral).



Do not accept assignments for which you know you are unqualified or not prepared.



Do not take assignments if you risk being biased or in case of conflict of interest (e.g. a family member or a close friend is involved).



Do not repeat what you have heard to friends, relatives, or anyone else.



Do not use your position to exercise power or pressure over any speaker or listener.



Do not use your position to gain favors, including financial, from any speaker or listener.



Do not comment on what you interpret or answer a question on behalf of one of the speakers.



Do not show your feelings or express your opinion. It is important to remain neutral.



Do not hold a separate conversation with one speaker without interpreting for the others.

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