



**STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**MOLLY M. SPEARMAN**  
*STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION*

## **Spoken Language Interpretation Guidance for IEP Team Meetings**

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for Local Educational Agency (LEA) representatives and Individualized Education Program (IEP) case managers/team leads as they prepare for and conduct IEP team meetings that include a spoken language interpreter. As a reminder, districts are required to take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the parent understands the proceedings of the IEP team meeting, including arranging for an interpreter for parents whose native language is other than English.<sup>a</sup>

### **Before the Meeting**

- Consult the Home Language Survey (HLS) to identify specific language needs.
- Contact the family to confirm the parents' preferred language. Although the HLS asks parents in which language they would prefer communication from the school, written and spoken communication needs may differ and it may be beneficial to reach out to the parent/guardian to ensure the IEP team meeting is conducted in a meaningful language, which they can understand.
- Provide parents with information (purpose and items for discussion) in their native language.<sup>b</sup> In some instances (e.g., Spanish), template forms, such as meeting notices, can be printed from South Carolina (SC) Enrich IEP. In other instances, you would need to contact the parent by phone with an interpreter or have the meeting notice translated.
- Inform parent(s) that an interpreter will be present.
- Schedule the interpreter for the meeting. A good interpreter is one who is proficient in English as well as the interpreted language, is knowledgeable of the IEP process, and possesses an understanding of cultural differences.
- If the student receives English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services, the IEP team should include a professional with training, and preferably expertise, in second language acquisition and an understanding of how to differentiate between the student's limited English proficiency and the student's disability. This would typically be the ESOL teacher or school psychologist.
- Inform district team members that there will be an interpreter present and that the meeting will require additional time (typically twice as long as a non-interpreted meeting).
- Prepare a meeting agenda that allows for extended time for interpretation.
- Consider providing space and time for the interpreter to review relevant documents (e.g., agenda, draft IEPs, evaluation reports, and meeting notices) prior to the meeting.
- Consider logistics for phone interpretation and plan appropriately (i.e., technology needs, seating).

## During the Meeting

- Seat the interpreter in close proximity to parents.
- Read the Spoken Language Interpretation Script during IEP team member introductions. (The script is to be read by the LEA representative or IEP case manager/team lead.)
- Remind team members of the following, as needed:
  - Speak one at a time to avoid confusion.
  - Avoid side conversations.
  - Slow down, provide small bits of information, and allow for frequent breaks to aid in interpretation and increase parent understanding.
  - Look at and speak directly to parents, not the interpreter.
- Pause frequently and ask parents if they have any questions throughout the meeting. Check for understanding by observing body language and facial expressions.
- The parents may bring a bilingual person to the meeting who is knowledgeable of the child to assist them in understanding the discussions at the meeting. However, the trained interpreter retained by the district should be the official interpreter for the IEP team.
- Before the meeting adjourns:
  - Review any decisions as reported on the Prior Written Notice (PWN) and/or meeting notes with the team.
  - Discuss the timeline for parents receiving meeting documents.
  - Ask parents if they have any additional questions.

## General Steps to Improve the Interpreting Process

- Consider training for spoken language interpreters on their role during IEP meetings, including differences between advocates and interpreters. The interpreter's role is to interpret everything said in the meeting and not to summarize, rephrase, or add personal commentary.
- Consider district-wide training for IEP case managers/team leads on the translation features in SC Enrich IEP.
- Consider training spoken language interpreters regarding special terminology related to IEPs and special education. Some resources include:
  - The Professional Interpreter in Special Education certificate program through the University of Georgia. <https://www.georgiacenter.uga.edu/courses/teaching-and-education/professional-interpreter-special-education>  
*Disclaimer: While experts in the field have vetted this resource, the OSES in no way requires its use or purchase. This resource is provided as information only.*
  - [Office of Special Education Programs \(OSEP\) Spanish Glossary](#), 2nd Edition
- Provide a copy in English of all documents to parents on the day of the meeting, if possible. If requested by the parents, provide a copy of the IEP and/or other documents in the parents' primary language in a reasonable amount of time. Though complications may arise, and translations for more obscure languages may require additional time, it is reasonable to expect a parent will receive documents translated in more common languages (e.g., Spanish, French) within 20 school days.
- Consider discussing interpretation style with the interpreter (consecutive or simultaneous). Consecutive interpretation is recommended for most IEP team meetings.