

# Working With Interpreters

A reliable assessment of a patient/client with little or no English language cannot be made without a professional interpreter.

**Family or friends should not be used as interpreters** because their personal relationship with the patient/client influences what is said and not said for various reasons.

## *Some Tips for Using Interpreters*

- Ask if the patient/client has any preferences – eg a particular ethnicity, religion or gender
- If you work for the health service, you can have Health Care Interpreters available. Otherwise, use the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS): **Tel. 131 450**
- Organise the interpreter as early as possible to allow time to organise a suitable person
- Build a trusting, respectful working relationship with the interpreter
- Speak directly to the patient/client, using the first person
- Explain your own and the interpreter's role to the patient/client
- Explain confidentiality; and make sure the client understands
- Use clear language and short sentences
- Allow the interpreter to clarify information
- Avoid private conversations with the interpreter in front of the patient/client

*\*Adapted from Working With Refugees – A Guide for Social Workers: NSW Refugee Health Service and STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors); Sydney Australia September 2004*