

Your Workplace Health and Safety obligations when working with interpreters

Your organisation, as a 'person conducting a business or undertaking' under Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) legislation, has a duty of care to ensure the health and safety of interpreters providing services to you.

Interpreting is a complex intellectual activity requiring high levels of concentration and skills and can be very demanding. As such, you must provide interpreters with reasonable short breaks in accordance with the current WHS legislation and the JCCD National Recommended Standards on Working with Interpreters policy document.

This is especially important in complex and/or lengthy assignments, provided via telephone or videoconference facilities. For interpreter assignments booked for 60 minutes or more, or face-to-face assignments booked for 90 minutes or more, you are required to provide regular breaks for each 30 minutes worked of approximately 10-15 minutes per break. Language Experts expects that you provide interpreters with a more substantial break (at least 30 minutes) after five hours of interpreting. In addition to meeting your duty of care obligations, adequate breaks also assist in ensuring optimal interpreting outcomes for you and your clients.

Language Experts expects that the arrangements for breaks be addressed with the interpreter directly at the beginning of each interpreter assignment. Language Experts recommends that information on appropriate breaks for interpreters is included in any training you provide to your staff on how to work with interpreters.

Professional interpreter fees charged are not reduced for any breaks you provide to an interpreter. Breaks are considered as paid time.

When interpreters perform face-to-face interpreter assignments for you, they are subject to the WHS policies and procedures of your workplace.

The best way to help minimise risks to interpreters is to ensure they are included in your WHS planning, such as providing them with a WHS orientation when they arrive at the site.

Orientation for interpreters may cover topics such as:

- the nature of the operations of your organisation and the associated hazards and risks
- appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise risks to health and safety
- processes for receiving information about incidents, hazards and risks in your workplace.

Language Experts informs its practitioners about their obligation to attend WHS orientations for face-to-face assignments when requested. If an incident occurs involving an interpreter while performing a face-to-face assignment in your workplace, you are required to process such incidents in accordance with the WHS legislation.

Language Experts appreciates you will inform the company of any incidents reported via email to mail@languageexperts.com.au