

**433—2.14(216A) Ethics and code of professional conduct for interpreters.**

**2.14(1)** Accuracy and completeness. An interpreter shall render a complete and accurate interpretation by reproducing in the target language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, without altering, omitting, or adding anything to the meaning of what is stated or written, and without explanation.

*a.* An interpreter has a twofold role:

- (1) To ensure that the interpreter reflects precisely what was said by all pertinent parties; and
- (2) To place persons with limited proficiency in the English language on an equal footing with persons who understand English.

To fulfill these roles, an interpreter must apply the interpreter's best skills and judgment to preserve the meaning of what is said, as faithfully as possible and without editing. The interpreter should express the style or register of speech, the ambiguities and nuances of the speaker, and the level of language that best conveys the original meaning of the source language. Verbatim, "word for word," and literal oral interpretations are inappropriate when they distort the meaning of what is said in the source language. However, all spoken statements, including misstatements, should be interpreted, even if they appear unresponsive, obscene, rambling, or incoherent.

*b.* The interpreter's obligation to preserve accuracy includes the duty to correct any errors of interpretation discovered while interpreting.

*c.* The interpreter's ethical responsibility to interpret accurately and completely includes the responsibility of being properly prepared for interpreting assignments, and is especially important when the situation or documents include highly specialized terminology and subject matter.

**2.14(2)** Conveying cultural frameworks. An interpreter shall explain cultural differences or practices to providers and clients when appropriate. The interpreter, therefore, must be mindful of those occasions where unshared cultural beliefs and assumptions can create a barrier to effective communication. In these situations, the role of interpreter is twofold:

*a.* To identify the possibility that a cultural misunderstanding is creating a barrier to communication; and

*b.* To assist both the provider and client in exploring with each other what this barrier may be.

**2.14(3)** Representation of qualifications. An interpreter shall accurately and completely represent the interpreter's certifications, training, and experience. An interpreter shall promptly report to the provider any disciplinary action taken against the interpreter.

**2.14(4)** Impartiality and avoidance of conflict of interest.

*a.* An interpreter shall be impartial and unbiased and shall refrain from conduct that may give an appearance of bias. An interpreter shall disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest.

*b.* An interpreter shall avoid any conduct or behavior that presents the appearance of favoritism toward the client or provider. An interpreter should maintain professional relationships with clients, discourage personal dependence on the interpreter, and avoid participation in the interaction other than as an interpreter.

*c.* An interpreter shall strive for professional detachment. Verbal and nonverbal displays of personal attitudes, prejudices, emotions, or opinions must be avoided at all times.

*d.* An interpreter shall not solicit or accept any payment, gift or gratuities in addition to compensation.

*e.* Any condition that interferes with the objectivity of an interpreter constitutes a conflict of interest and must be disclosed to all concerned parties. An interpreter should divulge only necessary information when disclosing the conflict of interest. The disclosure shall not include privileged or confidential information. The following circumstances create potential conflicts of interest that must be disclosed:

(1) The interpreter is a friend, associate, or relative of a client or provider.

(2) For any reason, the interpreter's independence of judgment would be compromised in the course of providing services.

The existence of either of the above-mentioned circumstances shall be carefully evaluated by all pertinent parties, but does not alone disqualify an interpreter from providing services if the interpreter

is able to render services objectively. The interpreter shall disclose any indication that the recipient of interpreting services views the interpreter as biased. If an actual or apparent conflict of interest exists, the parties shall decide whether removal of the interpreter is appropriate based upon the totality of the circumstances.

**2.14(5) Professional demeanor.** An interpreter shall conduct the services of interpreting in a manner consistent with the dignity of the professional situation. An interpreter shall know and observe the established protocol, rules, and procedures for delivering interpreting services. While speaking, an interpreter shall speak at a rate and volume that enables the interpreter to be heard and understood. An interpreter shall be as unobtrusive as possible and shall not seek to draw inappropriate attention to the interpreter while performing professional duties, including anytime the interpreter is present, even though not actively interpreting.

**2.14(6) Interpreter positioning.** An interpreter should avoid obstructing the view of anyone involved in the interaction, but should be appropriately positioned to facilitate communication.

**2.14(7) Confidentiality.** An interpreter shall protect the confidentiality of all privileged and other confidential information. An interpreter must uphold the confidentiality of any communications between other persons or agencies and the client. An interpreter must also refrain from repeating or disclosing information obtained by the interpreter in the course of employment.

**2.14(8) Reporting criminal intent.** In the event an interpreter is providing services to a party and becomes aware of an intention to inflict harm or commit a crime, the interpreter shall immediately disclose the information to all pertinent parties. In an emergency, the interpreter shall disclose the information to an appropriate authority.

**2.14(9) Information for personal gain.** An interpreter shall not take advantage of knowledge obtained in the performance of duties, or by the interpreter's access to records, facilities, or privileges, for the interpreter's own or another's personal gain.

**2.14(10) Restriction of public comment.** An interpreter shall not publicly discuss, report or offer an opinion concerning a matter in which the interpreter is or has been engaged, even when that information is not privileged or required by law to be confidential, except to facilitate training and education.

Generally, an interpreter should not discuss interpreter assignments with anyone other than persons who have a formal duty associated with the case. However, an interpreter may share information for training and education purposes, divulging only so much information as is required to accomplish this purpose. Unless so ordered by a court, an interpreter must never reveal privileged or confidential information for any purpose, including training and education.

**2.14(11) Scope of practice.** An interpreter shall be limited to interpreting and shall not give advice, express personal opinions to individuals for whom the interpreter is interpreting, or engage in other activities which may be construed to constitute a service other than interpreting while serving as an interpreter.

**2.14(12) Assessing and reporting impediments to services.** An interpreter shall assess at all times the interpreter's ability to deliver services. When an interpreter has any reservation about the interpreter's ability to satisfy an assignment competently, the interpreter shall immediately convey that reservation to the appropriate authority.

**2.14(13) Duty to report violations.** An interpreter shall report to the proper authority any effort to impede the interpreter's compliance with any law, any provision of this code of conduct, or any other official policy governing interpreting.

**2.14(14) Professional development.** An interpreter shall strive to improve the interpreter's skills and knowledge and advance the profession through activities such as professional training and education and through interaction with colleagues and specialists in related fields. An interpreter shall improve the interpreter's interpreting skills and increase the interpreter's knowledge of the languages in which the interpreter works professionally, including past and current trends in slang, idiomatic expression, changes in dialect, technical terminology and social and regional dialects.

**2.14(15) Breach of ethics.** Any breach or perceived breach of ethics shall be reported to IDLA for investigation.

**2.14(16)** Specialized court, health, and social services interpreters shall meet the ethics requirements and code of professional conduct of their respective field of interpretation.