

## IRIS Guidelines for DARA Interpreters

Adapted from the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration guidelines

### Standards

1. **Introductions:** Ask your DARA team leader(s) for information before you begin to interpret. Ask what the goal is for the interpretation session, and what your role will be. (“Am I a cultural bridge, or an interpreter?”)
  - A. Greet the refugee client, introduce yourself, and explain that you are a volunteer interpreter and will not share their information with anyone outside of the session.
  - B. Ask the refugee client, “Are you comfortable with me serving as your interpreter at this time?” If they are uncomfortable or do not want you to be their interpreter for any reason, do not act annoyed or upset. Calmly tell them that is okay, and let your team leader(s) know that the client does not want you to interpret for them and that another interpreter should be found.
2. **Dialect:** Inform others present what language, including the specific dialect, you and the refugee client are speaking, and that the client is comfortable with that language. If the client is not fluent or comfortable in that dialect or language, stop the session.
3. **Body language:** It is important for the refugee client and others in the session to face one another because a lot of communication happens through facial expression and body language. You (and your voice) should be in the background. The refugee's attention should not be on you.
4. **Pauses:** If necessary, remind everyone to pause after each sentence or every few sentences. If you let someone speak for several minutes, you can really give only a summary of what was said, and useful information will be missed.
5. **First person:** Speak in the first person: “I need help using the bus,” not “She said she needs help using the bus.”
6. **Exact interpretation:** Translate what each speaker says word for word. Do not give a summary or leave out any information, even if it is very long or rude.
7. **Cultural expertise:** If it is clear that something someone says will not be understood by the other person for cultural reasons, tell the speaker that you need to give background information and then ask the other person's permission to give a culturally appropriate explanation. English and other languages can be filled with idioms. We understand that you may need to translate the meaning of those expressions rather than just the words .
8. **Clarification:** If you do not understand a question, ask for an explanation; do not guess at the meaning. As cosponsors, we often use special vocabulary that may be unclear to other people, and we should explain or ask the question in a different way.
  - A. If someone does not understand something the other person said, ask the other person to explain or to ask in a different way. Please do not answer their questions yourself.
9. **Personal input:** When you are an interpreter, you are not a cultural bridge. Please do not give a refugee client personal advice or any information aside from what the other person says.
10. **Conflict of interest:** It is always your right to recuse yourself as an interpreter if you feel it will be difficult for you to be impartial and/or you are not able to set aside your personal feelings during interpretation. If you identify too closely with a refugee client's experience in a way that makes you uncomfortable, or if you are already friends, or if the client is not respecting you, or if you have any other such conflicts, you can recuse yourself as an interpreter for that client.
11. **Absence:** If you cannot keep an interpretation appointment, please give your team leader(s) 24 hours' notice. If you might be late for an interpretation appointment, ask your team leader(s) to try to find someone else and to call you back if they cannot find anyone.

## Values

As a DARA volunteer interpreter, you uphold these values in your volunteer work:

- 1. Respect diversity:** Interpreters will not show disrespect or unkindness or judgement toward anyone. They will set a good example and try to make every refugee client feel that they are a part of the community, no matter if they are:
  - A.** from a different ethnic or religious group
  - B.** more conservative or more liberal than you
  - C.** a different gender than you
  - D.** living in a way you do not agree with
  - E.** gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender
- 2. Confidentiality:** Interpreters will respect refugee clients' confidentiality. Interpreters will not share names, addresses, phone numbers, or biographical information that identifies a client to **anyone** other than a DARA team member, IRIS staff, or healthcare provider who needs the information to do their job. This includes sharing information by speaking, writing, texting, on social media, or in any other way.

## Boundaries

DARA interpreters **are not**:

- **Case managers:** IRIS staff and DARA's team leaders manage refugee clients' cases. Interpreters do not.
- **24-hour interpreters:** DARA interpreters rarely give their personal phone number to refugees. The DARA Translation Coordinator manages communications and scheduling for DARA interpreters.
- **Romantic partners:** DARA volunteers are prohibited from having romantic relationships with refugee clients. If you receive a comment or other indication of such interest from a client that makes you uncomfortable, tell the DARA Translation Coordinator immediately.
- **A taxi service:** DARA schedules transportation for refugee clients via the Transportation Team, and you must be a verified DARA driver to provide transportation to our clients.
- **Benefactors:** Interpreters will not give money or significant gifts to refugee clients.
- **Proselytizers:** Interpreters will not promote religion, political views, or cultural norms to refugee clients.
- **Therapists:** Interpreters will not ask refugee clients if or why they were persecuted, why they came to the US, or about possibly traumatic things from their past. If a client brings up such information, interpreters will respond sensitively and carefully and will alert their team leader(s).
- **Enablers:** Interpreters will not do things for refugee clients that the clients need to learn to do on their own. DARA volunteers guide and empower our refugee clients to learn to do things for themselves.
- **Exhibits:** Interpreters are not required to tell their own stories or answer personal questions from anyone.

## Information for you

- Your name, contact information, and availability will be added to DARA's interpreters list. DARA's Translation Coordinator or other team leaders will contact you for interpretation. You may accept or decline each time.
- DARA's Translation Coordinator will contact you after 1 month and again after 3 months to ask how you are doing. You can contact the Translation Coordinator at any time.
- Please tell the DARA Translation Coordinator if you can no longer provide interpretation services.

I understand the information provided to me herein and I accept the IRIS Guidelines for DARA Interpreters.

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Name (please print)

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Signature

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Today's date (month, day year)