INTERPRETER SERVICES
Policy and Procedure

THIS POLICY SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH VITS POLICY ONLINE

QA REFERENCE	CWG P&P No 03
INTRODUCED	28th September 2010
LAST REVIEWED	13th October 2020
NEXT REVIEWED	13th October 2020
RESPONSIBILITY	The Operational Leadership Group is responsible for the review and currency of this policy and associated procedures.
APPROVED	Approved by the Chief Executive Officer on 13th October 2020. This policy and procedure is valid from the date of introduction and remains in force, as amended from time to time, until such time as formally revoked by resolution at a meeting of the Operational Leadership Group.
ENDORSED	Endorsed by the Operational Leadership Group on 13th October 2020.
REFERENCES	
Related Legislative Acts and other sources of Authority	- Children Youth and Families Act 2005 - Community Services Act 1987 - Housing Act 1983 (Vic) Part VIIIA – Social Housing - Residential Tenancies Act 2018 – with amendments 1/1/21 - Disability Services Act 1986 (Cth) - Disability Act 2006 (Vic) - National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 - Fair Work Act 2009 and Regulations 2009 (Cth) - Equal Opportunity Act 2010 - Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 - Freedom of Information Act 1982 - Information Privacy Act 2000 - Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 - Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) - Equal Opportunity Act (Vic) 2010 - Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Cth) - Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 and Amendment Bill 2019 (Vic) - Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
Related Standards, Guidelines and other References	- Human Services Standards - National Employment Standards - Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies - Standards for Disability Services in Victoria - Disability Services Commissioner

	• Office of the Disability Services Commissioner
	• Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
	• www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au
	• www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/health-public-affairs/mhcs/resources
	• www.vicdeaf.com.au
	• Language Services Access Guide DHHS September 2014 Department of Human Services Language Services Policy - See Sharepoint – CWG External Documents
Related MASP Policy and Procedure Documents	• Privacy and Confidentiality - M't P&P No 16 • Code of Conduct - HRM P&P No 12
Related MASP Instructions and Guidelines	• Nil noted
Related MASP Forms and Templates	• Interpreter Services Authorisation - CWG F&T No 01
ACRONYMS/DEFINITIONS	
• MASP	• Mallee Accommodation and Support Program Ltd
• Auslan	• Australian Sign Language
• VITS	• Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service
• NAATI	• National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)

PURPOSE

The purpose is to outline the requirements and available services relating to communicating with clients and families who require interpreting and translation assistance.

SCOPE

This policy applies to

- all staff, including: managers and supervisors; full-time, part-time or casual, temporary or permanent staff; students on placement and volunteers;

- how MASP provides services to clients and how it interacts with other members of the public;

- on-site, off-site or after-hours work; work-related social functions; conferences – wherever and whenever staff may be as a result of their MASP duties;

- staff treatment of clients, of other staff and of other members of the public encountered in the course of their MASP duties.

POLICY

Effective communication between worker and client is essential to the delivery of high-quality services. A client's vulnerability can be increased if they have limited or no English language skills or if they are deaf and/or cannot speak.

It is MASP Policy that **registered professional interpreters** always be used where it is important to ensure that we are getting the best and most comprehensive information from clients at all stages of intervention or service delivery, particularly when people are making significant life decisions and where

essential information is being communicated to ensure they are equipped to make informed decisions about their lives and their health. This requirement includes people who are deaf.

In these cases, engagement of interpreters using Australian Sign Language (Auslan) is appropriate (if they can sign) or other forms of assistance such as the TTY based National Relay Service.

This instruction touches briefly on services for those who are deaf or cannot speak but largely concentrates on services for those who do not have hearing/speech deficits seeking interpreting in and out of English.

In this respect it should be noted that use of family, friends and well-meaning individuals in interpreting and translating can be used only in a very limited way and their shortcomings should be recognised and confined (as far as possible) to non-critical, non-sensitive matters in the ongoing phase of contact. This is because of

- potential breaches of confidentiality;
- possible misinterpretation;
- conflict of interest;
- potential for loss of objectivity; and
- conflict of roles.

It is generally accepted that persons under the age of 18 (particularly young children) **should not be used** as interpreters and MASP staff should adhere to this general principle unless there are compelling reasons to use them. (Usually absolute refusal of client to use external interpreters other than family where the matter is time critical).

This instruction requires staff to **use professional interpreting services** when available and take advantage of free access to Interpreter services provided by DHHS. However, where this is not available at the time required by the worker/client, staff are authorised to **contract** legitimate authorised telephone Interpreter Services to provide Interpreting Services on a pay as you go basis, charged to MASP.

Note that 'interpreting' is defined as communicating between spoken or sign languages - 'translating' is communicating from written information.

Auslan Sign Language

Auslan is the most commonly accepted sign language for the Australian deaf community.

MASP staff are not expected to know Auslan and should recognise that it is difficult to engage interpreters in Mildura for face-to-face interpreting. However, should local services be available staff are able to use (and pay for) the service.

Interpreter services in relation to private medical appointments can be obtained through NABS (National Auslan Booking and Payment Service) but again availability can vary.

There is a register of Auslan Interpreters available at www.deafau.org.au/info/nair.php. It can provide information on local/regional Interpreter availability.

TTY: National Relay Service – for people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment

This service uses a third party (a Relay Officer) on the phone as an intermediary and usually a keyboard on which the participant types. This service is an Australian Government initiative. Use of this service

requires pre-planning, including working out equipment needed to meet specific needs, training and the setting up of a caller profile.

There are many computations and permutations of service delivery including

- using the Relay Officer to speak to the required party (participant types to Relay Officer and receives back typed information);
- using keyboard only (no third party);
- typing question and receiving verbal answer via Relay Officer;

Note both a dedicated telephone keyboard or a computer connected to the internet can be used for some aspects of this service.

For further information or support contact the following

TTY 1800 555 630
Voice 1800 555 660
Fax 1800 555 690
Email helpdesk@relayservice.com.au
Mail 21a Elliot St Balmain NSW 2041
Website www.relayservice.com.au

When to use (language) interpreters

DHHS funded programs require that people should have access to information in their own preferred language

- in life threatening situations;

- when obtaining information from the client undertaking assessments and care planning including conducting tests and forming diagnoses to inform treatment and service provision decision making;

- when communicating to and receiving important information from clients to enable them to make informed decisions about services options and the implications of these options;

- in direct service delivery that is based on conversations or other form of verbal/ signing communication e.g. counselling;

- when obtaining client consent to treatment or release of information;

- at interviews related to refusal of treatment, FOI requests, client complaints, residential care applications, tenancy or resident agreements and power of attorney and guardianship matters, and

- when communicating and receiving information from the parents or guardians of children regarding treatment, care and other service options.

To meet the above requirements, it is important for MASP to develop policies and procedures in the following areas.

- informing clients about the availability of language services;

- determining client need for language services, and

- assessing the adequacy of various types of language services.

See the DHHS document *Language Services Policy June 2014* for further information about these above three requirements.

Types of Interpreting

There are three main means of interpreting –

- Face to face - usually in the office,
- Telephone interpreting, via speaker phone or conference call and
- Video conferencing calls.

When identifying the need for an interpreter, it is important to note if the ethnicity and gender of the interpreter are relevant.

Clients refusing to use interpreters

Clients may sometimes refuse to use an interpreter due to concerns about confidentiality and privacy, particularly in smaller ethnic communities. It may also reflect a client's concern regarding the gender/religion of the interpreter.

In this situation

- workers should try to explore the client's reason for refusing an interpreter (via a telephone interpreter service or family/friends excluding family members under 18 years of age);

- workers should identify whether there are issues relating to trust or if the interpreter is involved within the client's social circle;

- workers should explain the consequences of not using a professional interpreter,

- if possible, communicating without an interpreter for a period and then reassessing the situation, or

- as a last resort, using family members or friends as interpreters, but not persons including family members under 18 years of age.

If the client still refuses to use an interpreter, this should be recorded in the client file.

In extreme cases where no other option is available, children may only be used to interpret basic information. The reason for using the child must be clearly documented.

USE OF FAMILY MEMBERS

If a family member/friend is assisting in interpreting, they must be 18 years and above unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary.

USING TELEPHONE INTERPRETER SERVICES

Telephone Interpreter Services are available through the Victorian Government funded Language Services Credit Line System.

MASP has a current account with the Language Services Credit Line System which MASP staff can use.

VICTORIAN PROCEDURES FOR BOOKING OF INTERPRETERS – using the Language Services Credit Line

The Department of Health & Human Services language service provider is the Victorian Interpreting and Translation Service (VITS).

Services provided by VITS include on-site interpreting, an automated telephone interpreting service and translation services. Bookings can be made using the VITS online booking system (the client portal), by telephone or by email. The preferred method for booking is via the VITS Client Portal.

To book using the Client Portal

1. Visit http://client.vits.com.au

2. Enter the MASP username **which is our five-digit client PIN number - 32743**

3. Complete the details covered by the online form

4. Then select the assignment type

Category	Sub category
DHS01 - Homelessness	Homelessness Services Housing assistance Community Housing
DHS02 – Inclusive Communities	Individualised Support Community Life and jobs Aids and equipment Advocacy Self-directed support Accommodation Supporting families and carers Specialised disability support
DHS03 – Children, Youth & Families	Family & early parenting support Youth Justice Kinship, foster and other care Gamily Violence Youth services
DHS04 - Court	Legal court proceedings

5. To assist MASP in tracking usage, please indicate the program area you work in under the 'department' field.

Follow the prompts to view, manage, edit or cancel your interpreter bookings and to view any past bookings.

For a step by step guide to using the portal, refer to the VITS Online Client Portal User Manual available from VITS or from the Funded Agency Channel.

Telephone Bookings

For immediate connection to a Telephone Interpreter via the VITS automated telephone interpreting service, please call the number specific to the language you require and enter **your five-digit client PIN 32743** when required to do so.

Language	Phone
Vietnamese, Bosnian, Amharic	(03) 9280 1901
Greek, Somali, Korean	(03) 9280 1902
Turkish, Polish, Cambodian	(03) 9280 1903
Arabic, Serbian, Mandarin	(03) 9280 1904
Italian, Macedonian, Cantonese	(03) 9280 1905
Spanish, Croatian, Russian	(03) 9280 1906
Dari, Dinka, Sudanese	(03) 9280 1908
Persian, Burmese, Thai	(03) 9280 1909
All other languages	(03) 9280 1907

Follow the prompts and when asked to provide the following

Employment Code – please provide MASP PIN/USERNAME – 32743 and then provide VITS password which is 10255.

Reference Number – please indicate either Category 1, 2, 3 or 4 from the table above to indicate the service type.

Pre-booking a telephone interpreter
Bookings can only be made up to 30 days in advance.

For assignments expected to go for longer than 45 minutes, a telephone interpreter can be booked through the Client Portal (**http://client.vits.com.au**), by phoning **03-92801955** or by emailing **interpreting.bookings@vits.com.au**.

You must quote the MASP five-digit PIN **32743** when booking a service.

Importance of Cancelling
If **they** call and you or the client are not available you will be charged for the call booked, therefore, it is important that you cancel appointments when you know in advance that they are not attending as organised.

Suggested Length
It is usual for assessments and similar interviews, particularly initial interviews, to require at least an hour.

Preparation
It is recommended that you prepare for the Interview by writing down the questions you are going to ask (other than those that are on the official intake forms/case plans etc). It is also recommended that you focus on the task at hand and not get sidetracked onto immediate issues which are not urgent... you can say that those issues can be dealt with at the end of the interview.

Initial sessions / client rights
Just as you would for an English-Speaking client, you must go through the giving of appropriate 'client rights' information. Particularly Confidentiality, Use of Consent forms, complaints policy, information about the program and how MASP operates etc. before you start the information collecting phase with clients.

Program Manager

- Note that an Interpreter Request from a caseworker should **normally be approved** as a matter of course.
- Sign Contract Form
- Forward to Finance staff who will keep a register of such requests for monitoring purposes and will keep a watch on expenditure and report to the OLG when it exceeds $500 in any month.

In Summary

In summary, these measures ensure that there will be no financial obstacles to the use of interpreters in almost any crisis, critical situation or important initial (or subsequent) assessment interview.

The expenditure on this matter will be monitored carefully by Finance personnel and a review of policy and procedure will take place every six months.

NSW PROCEDURES FOR BOOKING OF INTERPRETERS

The Commonwealth Department of Human Services and the NSW Dept of Family & Community Services (FACS) language service provider is the Translation & Interpreting Service (TIS).

Workers involved with any NSW funded program, or federally funded ACHA and HACC programs should follow the procedure below.

The worker can call TIS on **131450** and organise an interpreter or book online in advance.

They will need to provide the following information:

- MASP NSW program client (agency) code is: C977218
- Worker will have their Id which is their email address
- Enter their own password

The link to their website is: https://www.tisnational.gov.au

USING TRANSLATING SERVICES

On rare occasions MASP staff will need to use translating services. As this is usually a cost item all such requests should be directed through and approved by a member of the OLG.

DHHS has limited the cost of a single translation request via the Language Service Credit Line System to a maximum of $500.

(As a guide, $500 is approximately 1900 words).

The following item will not be translated under the DHHS Credit Line:

- Minutes of Meetings
- Annual Reports
- Business plans or mission statements
- Advertising and agency publicity

Prior to requesting the use of a translating service staff should carefully read and comply with the suggestions set out in the document *Checklist for Organising Translations*. This document is attached as **Appendix 1** to this instruction.

The DHHS web page www.dhhs.vic.gov.au has a suite of existing translated materials and these can be accessed free of charge.

Translations can be organised by using one of the following processes:

Email: translations@vits.com.au Translation Enquiries phone: **03-92801941**

GOOGLE TRANSLATE

Some discussion about an instantaneous translating service **(Google Translate)** is important.

In this service, available over the Internet, a simultaneous translation can be made from English to a wide variety of languages. This **can** only be used by MASP staff in the following circumstances:

- That the case manager is aware of the considerable margin for error in more complex translations or in sensitive and precise questioning or information giving (the subtleties of one language can often not be well translated into another).
- That the client must be literate in their own language.
- That the service should not be relied upon for critical information taking and giving.
- The translated copy containing both the English and Translated versions (side by side) should be retained on file.

This service can be useful for conveying simple short instructions and is often better than nothing, but care is needed in its use as a secondary aid.

THE FUTURE

MASP is constantly trying to improve its service delivery and particularly its delivery to clients from CALD backgrounds. Staff are encouraged to raise difficulties and barriers to effective service with their Supervisor.

Also DHHS intends to collect translated material develop by community organisations that has a broad application and provide this free of charge on their language services web page which can be found at **www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/languageservices.**

APPENDIX 1: Organising a translation checklist

Step 1: Deciding whether to prepare a translation

✓ Has this material already been translated?

Are existing translations suitable, or able to be adapted with minor changes? Check the Department of Human Services web page at www.dhhs.vic.gov.au and select the language (at the bottom of the screen) to see if there is a suitable document.

✓ Is a printed translation an effective way to communicate with your target audience?

Consider the literacy level, subject matter and communications preference. If the literacy level is low, audio files or DVDs may be more appropriate.

✓ Would this translation be required by other organisations in your sector?

If the document can be used by the sector, consider developing the document with other organisations to maximise resource use.

Step 2: Preparing the document for translation

✓ Is the document written in plain English?

To ensure that your document is easy to read for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities please ensure that it is written in plain English, which will be easy to translate.

✓ Have you assessed the document to ensure it only includes essential information?

Only translate the relevant sections of a document, or develop a summary document for translation.

✓ Have you chosen the most appropriate languages?

The most appropriate languages may be apparent based on your target population. If not you can seek information from:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics: www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/Census
- the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs Settlement Database: www.immi.gov.au/settlement/
- the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship: www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/population-and-migration/victorias-diversity
- local government authorities.

Keep in mind that the most commonly spoken languages in Victoria or Australia are not necessarily the languages spoken by your target group.

✓ Is your material culturally appropriate?

Does the material cover subjects that may be sensitive or unfamiliar to the target audience? If so, you may wish to consult with ethnic community organisations, community workers, focus groups or potential clients.

Step 3: Getting a quote

✓ Has VITS been contacted about the translation?

The Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service (VITS) s the Department of Human Services preferred provider, and where possible VITS should be used to provide translations. In most instances, VITS will provide NAATI accredited translators so you should receive a quality translation.

Organisations and eligible department staff working in direct service delivery can access translations through the Language Services Credit Line services provided by VITS by using their organisation's or area's PIN. Restrictions do apply; see section 8 of this guide for further information.

Step 4: Questions to ask when ordering a translation or interpreting service

Whilst VITS is the department's preferred provider for language services, should there be need to use another language service provider or individual translator the following questions will assist you when sourcing a quotation.

✓ What level of accreditation does the translator have?

The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) accredits translators at different levels. Victorian Government policy is that government departments or funded organisations should use NAATI accredited 'professional' level translators where available, 'paraprofessional' level translators as the next option and 'recognised' level translators only where translators at the other levels are not available. Ask to see the translators NAATI certificate, identification card or translator stamp.

Note that accreditation may not be available for language groups that are uncommon or emerging in Australia. However NAATI may accord 'recognition' status to acknowledge that a translator has had recent and regular experience with the language.

✓ Does the translator have experience in the relevant field?

It is preferable, but not always possible, to use a translator who is familiar with the subject matter, concepts and terminology from your sector. Developing a glossary of commonly used terms can be beneficial to the translator.

✓ Does the quote include independent checking, editing and proofreading by another accredited translator?

Translations of important information should be checked or back-translated to allow comparison with the original text and to ensure it doesn't contain inaccurate or misleading information.

✓ In what format will the finished product be delivered?

It is important to consider what the best format is for your target audience. This may be written, audio file or a DVD.

✓ What fees apply if you need to cancel or make changes to the English text?

Before making changes or cancelling translations check with VITS to see if any fees apply.

✓ How long will it take to complete the translations?

It is important to ask how long a translation will take, especially if you have deadline.

✓ Does the agency or translator have professional indemnity insurance cover?

This is important in case your agency becomes involved in a legal case in relation to the translation.

Step 5: Finalising your material

✓ Have you put the date, language and topic of the publication on the front of the translated document in English?

This is useful for others that may need to use the translation.

✓ Have you done a final check of the material?

A final check is needed to make sure that formatting is correct on uploaded or printed material. Even if you are unable to understand the translated material a check against the original translation will indicate if significant changes have occurred during the printing or uploading process.

Helpful resources

The Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship publication *Improving the Use of Translating and Interpreting Services* available on: www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/projects-and-initiatives/improving-language-services/standards-and-guidelines

The Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health publication *Language Services Good Practice in the Victorian Health and Community Sector* available on: www.ceh.org.au/resources/publications

The (UK) Institute of Translation and Interpreting publication *Translation Getting it Right: a Guide to Buying Translations* available on: www.iti.org.uk/about-industry/advice-buyers/getting-it-right