

## **Block-Time Scheduled Interpreter Appointment Guidelines** **Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and** **Department of Children, Youth, & Families (DCYF)**

DSHS/DCYF field offices scheduling block-time interpreters and the Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity(s) shall utilize the following guidelines to ensure the appropriate and efficient use of interpreters.

### **Definition:**

Block-time scheduled interpreter appointments are appointments scheduled for a specific time, rather than for a specific client. These appointments are scheduled for 2 to 8 hours per day, and are scheduled for one or multiple days of the week to meet the various interpreting needs of an office.

### **Block-Time Schedule - INTERPRETER RESPONSIBILITIES:**

#### **Primary**

- Provide interpreter (verbal) services in the following settings:
  - Scheduled limited English proficient (LEP) client appointments.
  - Walk-in services provided to LEP clients at the front desk.
  - Telephone calls between a worker and LEP client.
  - Documents needing to be interpreted (“sight translated”) to determine and/or explain the content of the document to the monolingual person (staff or client) needing this information.
  - Accompany Social Service providers to off-site locations to assist with interpretation need in a client’s home or in the community.

#### **Secondary**

- Provide translation (written) services in the following settings:
    - Documents generated during an interview interpreted by the block-time scheduled interpreter.
    - Documents/text with the following characteristics:
      - Fill-in text needed to complete a department form.
      - Text of 100 words or less for other types of documents (e.g., note from a client, ACES letter free-form text, etc.).
- Please note the following regarding translation services:
- *Interpreters need only to be certified as a Social Services Interpreter to be eligible to provide the translation services outlined above (i.e., translator certification is not a requirement for performing these responsibilities).*
  - *Interpreters should not be asked to perform translation of legal or contract related materials that are considered complicated or technical in nature.*
  - *25% or less of an interpreter’s time can be spent performing translation services during a block-time scheduled appointment.*
- Provide other language related tasks as needed (e.g., taking non-English phone messages from voice mail).

When not providing any of the services mentioned above (i.e., during downtime), the interpreter shall remain in the designated “interpreter area” until their services are needed. Interpreters shall refrain from walking around the office and socializing with staff or clients during periods of downtime.

When in a Community Service Office (CSO) interpreters are required to complete and sign the Block Time Scheduled Interpreter log for each block time scheduled assignment and leave it with the CSO worker. A blank log is at the end of this document. DCYF offices may have a different system or utilize a different log.

### **Block-Time Schedule – DSHS/DCYF STAFF CONSIDERATIONS/RESPONSIBILITIES:**

DSHS/DCYF staff shall maintain an appropriate employee/contractor relationship with interpreters. Please note:

- Field offices shall submit requests for block-time interpreters at least two weeks prior to the block-time appointment (when possible) and may submit requests for up to 3 months of appointments at the time of request.
- Field office staff should inform the interpreter, as soon as they know, if they will need to attend out of office appointments for clients during the scheduled day.
- Interpreters must **not** be asked to perform any of the following tasks in the office:
  - Answer phone calls and/or respond to general phone inquiries.
  - Provide other clerical functions (e.g., copying, filing, faxing).
  - Have unsupervised contact with a client. An employee should be present anytime the interpreter has contact with a client.
  - Any other non-language assistance related tasks.
- Interpreters are **not** allowed to use state resources (i.e., computers {including email}, telephones or any other DSHS/DCYF equipment or supplies) for personal use. This includes using state resources to communicate with the Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity(s).
- Interpreters are permitted to have cell phones while at a field office, however, the ringer shall be muted and use of the cell phone shall be limited to emergencies and occasional, brief conversations with the Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity. Interpreters are prohibited from conducting any outside business and using their cell phone for things unrelated to their work at the field office, including interpreting over-the-phone.
- Block-time scheduled interpreters are **not** entitled to, nor should they be encouraged to, take formal breaks outside of the time they have off for lunch. The amount of time off for lunch is determined by the requesting office, and **must be identified at the time of request**. This time is **not** reimbursable. For each block time scheduled interpreter assignment, the time taken off for lunch must be documented on the CSO Block Time Scheduled Interpreter Log.
- To assist with ensuring block-time scheduled appointments are being used efficiently and appropriately, DSHS field offices shall ask interpreters to maintain a log of services they provide during the block-time. A blank log is at the end of this document. **DSHS Offices are required to use the Block Time Scheduled Interpreter log for all block-time scheduled appointments.** The retention schedule for the Block Time Scheduled Interpreter log is 2 years from the month of service. The Block Time Scheduled Interpreter log for DSHS offices will be submitted to the LAP manager on a weekly basis. If it is determined that an interpreter is experiencing a lot of downtime and/or providing a significant amount of translation services, the block scheduled time shall be adjusted accordingly.
- The interpreter services contract is between DSHS/DCYF and the Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity(s). Interpreters are prohibited from working directly with field offices to create or change interpreter appointment schedules. Field offices shall work directly with the Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity(s) to schedule interpreter appointments. The Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity is responsible for communicating appointment schedules to interpreters. Interpreters that approach field office staff with concerns regarding the block-time schedule or any other issue will be referred back to the Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity. Services performed from scheduling done between field staff and an interpreter, are **not** reimbursable under the Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity contract.
- Field offices shall immediately report to the Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity any interpreter behavior that is, or appears to be, inconsistent with the guidelines outlined in this document and with their expected role as a contracted interpreter. Additional information regarding the role and expectations of interpreters is attached. ([WAC 388.03.050 - Code of Professional Conduct](#))

### **Block-Time Schedule – INTERPRETER SERVICE COORDINATING ENTITY(S) RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- 1) The Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity(s) will establish a pool of authorized block-time interpreters using the following standards. ESA and DCYF block-time schedule interpreters shall:
  - A.) Be certified/authorized as a DSHS Social Services interpreter;
  - B.) For a 6-month period prior to the appointment date, have no confirmed instances of serious Code of Professional Conduct violations, including if interpreter had 2 or more confirmed instances of unexcused interpreter “no-shows” within six (6) months, while providing services for the Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity scheduled encounters system wide.
    - o New Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity(s) will use data from the effective date of contract.

The Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity(s) may request an exception to these block-time interpreter qualification standards, if there is no interpreter available who meet all of the qualification standards. The request must be submitted in writing (email) to the appropriate DSHS/DCYF LAP Manager within five (5) business days of the block-time appointment. The DSHS/DCYF LAP Manager will respond with an approval or denial of the request in writing within three (3) business days of block-time appointment.

Each contracted, the Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity(s) will ensure that interpreters do not exceed 1000 hours at any one (ie: DSHS CSOs or DCYF office) per calendar year. Coordinating Entity(s) will need to restrict the interpreter from accepting future block appointments.

The Interpreter Service Coordinating Entity will provide a copy of these guidelines to interpreters who are authorized to work block-time scheduled appointments.

**Any serious violation of these guidelines or the Code of Professional Conduct may result in disqualification of the interpreter as a block-time schedule interpreter for a minimum of one year. DSHS/DCYF will review the violation or conduct and determine the outcome and notify coordinating entity(s).**

## Code of Professional Conduct

### 1. Accuracy

Interpreters/translators shall always thoroughly and faithfully render the source language message, omitting or adding nothing, giving consideration to linguistic variations in both source and target languages, conserving the tone and spirit of the source language message.

### 2. Cultural Sensitivity – Courtesy

Interpreters/translators shall be culturally sensitive, and respectful of the individuals they serve.

### 3. Confidentiality

Interpreters/translators shall not divulge any information obtained through their assignments, including but not limited to, information gained through access to documents or other written materials.

### 4. Disclosure

Interpreters/translators shall not publicly discuss, report, or offer an opinion concerning matters in which they are or have been engaged, even when that information is not privileged by law to be confidential.

### 5. Proficiency

Interpreters/translators shall meet the minimum proficiency standard set by DSHS.

### 6. Compensation

The fee schedule agreed to between the contracted language services providers and the department shall be the maximum compensation accepted. Interpreters/translators shall not accept additional money, considerations, or favors for services reimbursed by the department. Interpreters/translators shall not use for private or others' gain or advantage; the department's time or facilities, equipment or supplies, nor shall they use or attempt to use their position to secure privileges or exemptions.

### 7. Non-discrimination

Interpreters/translators shall always be neutral, impartial and unbiased. Interpreters/ translators shall not discriminate on the basis of gender, disability, race, color, national origin, age, socio-economic or educational status, or religious, political, or sexual orientation. If interpreters/translators are unable to ethically perform in a given situation, the interpreters/translators shall refuse or withdraw from the assignment without threat or retaliation.

### 8. Self-evaluation

Interpreters/translators shall accurately and completely represent their certifications, training, and experience.

**9. Conflict of Interest**

Interpreters/translators shall disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest. As an example, providing interpreter/translation services for family members or friends may violate the individual's right to confidentiality, constitute a conflict of interest, or violate a DSHS contract or subcontract.

**10. Professional Demeanor**

Interpreters/translators shall be punctual, prepared, and dressed in a manner appropriate, and not distracting, for the situation.

**11. Scope of Practice**

Interpreters/translators shall not counsel, refer, give advice, or express personal opinions to individuals for whom they are interpreting/translating, or engage in any other activities that may be construed to constitute a service other than interpreting/translating. Interpreters are prohibited from having unsupervised access to clients, including but not limited to phoning clients directly, other than at the request of a DSHS employee or DSHS-contracted service provider (e.g., medical provider). Interpreters are also prohibited from marketing their interpreter services to clients, including but not limited to, arranging services or appointments for clients in order to create business for themselves. Additionally, interpreters shall not transport DSHS clients for any DSHS business, including social service or medical appointments.

**12. Reporting Obstacles to Practice**

Interpreters/translators shall assess at all times their ability to interpret/translate. Should interpreters/translators have any reservations about their competency, they must immediately notify the parties and offer to withdraw without threat of retaliation.

**13. Ethical Violations**

Interpreters/translators shall immediately withdraw from encounters they perceive as violations of this Code. Any violation of the Code of Professional Conduct may result in termination of the contract and/or prohibition from serving DSHS clients.

**14. Professional Development**

Interpreters/translators are encouraged to develop their skills and knowledge through professional training, continuing education, and interaction with colleagues, and specialists in related fields.

