

## Tips for Working with Interpreters in Mental Health Settings

### ❖ Information To Provide To The Interpreter When Arranging The Appointment

- Consumer's language, be specific as possible
  - (i.e., not Spanish, but Colombian Spanish)
- Family's language (if applicable)
- Racial/ethnic background
- General diagnostic information
- Educational background, if known
- Purpose of appointment (assessment, ongoing counseling, etc)
- Gender preference, if clinically significant
- Logistical information (location, contact person, security requirements, etc)

### ❖ Pre-Session

- Schedule enough time to allow 5-15 mins for pre-session briefing and post-session review
- Arrange an area for the interpreter to wait separate from the consumer and/or family
- Meet with the interpreter and discuss:
  - Purpose of the appointment
  - Who will be present
  - Cultural "landmines" or "tips" (knowing these may not apply to this specific client)
  - Specific vocabulary or concepts, especially those with a meaning unique to the clinical setting (e.g. mindfulness, black out)
  - Potential safety or security concerns
  - Procedures to clarify and/or interrupt the process, if needed

### ❖ In Session

- Introduce the interpreter and explain their role
- Speak directly to the consumer, not the interpreter
- Use short sentences
- Give the interpreter enough time to interpret, depending on whether you are using a simultaneous or consecutive mode
- Ask consumer for feedback to demonstrate understanding
- Avoid idiomatic expressions, jargon and sarcasm

### ❖ Post Session

- Discuss how the session went
  - Identify both problems and solutions
- Clarify any confusion or ambiguity of meaning
- Do not expect the interpreter to provide you with a mental health opinion
- Do expect the interpreter to provide you with information about language usage, dysfluency or problems