

Interpretation Logistics for TIP Cases

A WARNATH GROUP PRACTICE GUIDE



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The WARNATH GROUP

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PRACTICE GUIDE
by The Warnath Group

AT A GLANCE

Intended Audience:

- Investigators and prosecutors working on human trafficking cases.

Takeaway: While using an interpreter to communicate with a witness or defendant, it is important to establish a relationship with the interviewee while considering the needs of the interpreter.

In This Practice Guide:

- The importance of the physical setup of the interpreter
- Possible set-ups for interviewer, interviewee and interpreter
- Strategies to connect to the interviewee
- How to communicate clearly for the interpreter

INTRODUCTION

Victims of human trafficking are often exploited in places where they do not speak the local language. Investigators and prosecutors may often find themselves working with an interpreter to communicate with case witness(es) or defendant(s). Once you locate an appropriate interpreter¹ and establish the ground rules for working together, you will have to tackle the logistics involved in using an interpreter.

After the interpreter has been identified, checked for conflicts, and has agreed to the confidentiality requirements you can turn your attention to the logistics.

PHYSICAL SETUP

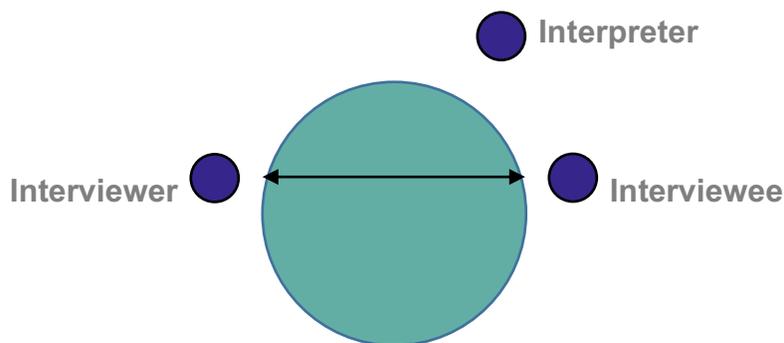
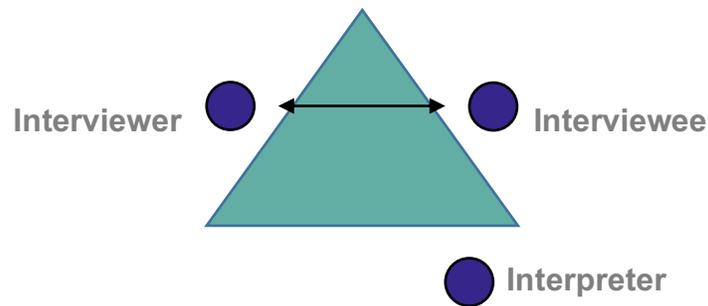
The physical location of the interpreter in relationship to the interviewer and interviewee is extremely important when doing an interview. You should

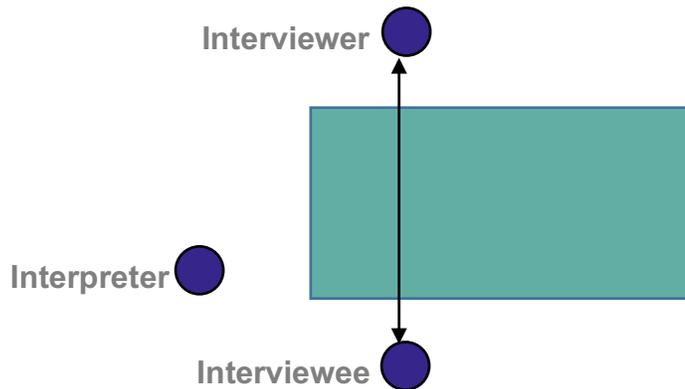
¹ If you have not yet selected an interpreter – please see the Practice Guide entitled *Working with Interpreters on TIP Cases*.

determine where everyone will sit before the interview begins; do not just leave it up to chance or last-minute shuffling. Generally, the interpreter will sit off to the side so you and the interviewee can make easy eye contact with each other and hear and be heard by the interpreter. Even if you cannot speak the same language it is important for you as the interviewer to make eye contact with the victim or witness. You want to watch their body language as they talk and show that you are listening to what they have to say.

Depending upon the location and furniture available you might seat yourself in various configurations.

Possible Set-Ups for Interviewer, Interviewee and Interpreter





CONNECT WITH THE INTERVIEWEE

Always remember that this is a conversation with the interviewee, not the interpreter. When you are talking look at the interviewee so he or she can see your face. When the interviewee is talking to you, look at him or her to indicate that you are paying attention and are interested in what he or she has to say.

Speak to the interviewee directly, do not address the interpreter and do not use third party language. For example, you should look at the interviewee and say: "What is your name?" Do not look at the interpreter and say: "Ask her what her full name is." You will find that if you talk directly to the interviewee as if the interpreter was not there the conversation will flow more smoothly. This also makes it easy for the interpreter as they will be able to simply relay your words in the interviewee's language, and don't have to construct their own direct question and then interpret.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY FOR THE INTERPRETER

Keep in mind that the interpreter's job can be difficult, and the more easily understood you are the easier it will be for the interpreter to communicate your question or comment clearly and completely. Here are a few tips to ensure that you are clearly understood, so the interpreter can do a good job:

- ✓ Use shorter sentences and clear words.
- ✓ If you know you are going to use legal language or terms of art in the interview discuss those in advance with the interpreter, so the interpretation is accurate.
- ✓ If you are a fast talker try to speak slower than usual.
- ✓ If you are using consecutive interpretation pause every few sentences to give the interpreter a chance to interpret. This makes it easier for the interpreter to remember everything you said, and helps keep the attention of the interviewee.
- ✓ Do not rely on voice inflection or emphasis to make yourself understood. What you say is far more important than how you say it as the interpreter will share your words but not necessarily your inflection or emphasis. This may involve additional explanation that would not otherwise be required. For example, instead of saying “WHY did you do that?” you could say: “It is important that I know why you chose to do that. Can you tell me why?”

DON'T OVERWORK THE INTERPRETER

Interpretation can be both mentally and physically taxing. The interpreter is “on” during the entire conversation – as he or she is interpreting for both parties. Make sure you take frequent breaks so that the interpreter has a chance to rest briefly.

When you use an interpreter your interviews will take longer. If you are working in a victim-centered way, you need to make sure the victim is not overwhelmed by the length of the session. You also want to consider how the length of the session may impact the interpreter. Schedule a clearly defined block of time for the interview as a way to be respectful of everyone’s time. The longer the interview schedule the more breaks you will need to plan for.

Keep in mind that you might need to have several interview sessions before you get the whole story from the interviewee. Be patient. If you and the interviewee both feel comfortable with the interpreter try to use him or her again (set up a time before everyone leaves the office).

Acknowledgements

For more information about interpretation logistics for human trafficking cases, contact the Warnath Group at info@WarnathGroup.com. To access additional practical tools and resources, visit our website at www.WarnathGroup.com. Studies and background material – including the stories of victims of human trafficking -- are at www.NEXUSInstitute.net.

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