

Japan Association for Refugees Interpreter's Code of Conduct

All interpreters working for the Japan Association for Refugees (JAR) agree to be bound to this code of conduct, and must have read and signed his/her acceptance of this code. Most refugees are non- or limited-Japanese speakers. Many also do not speak English. The role of an interpreter is to take a verbal message spoken in one language and render it into another language **without adding, deleting, or modifying its meaning or intent**, so that two or more people may communicate directly as if they spoke the same language.

The demands placed on interpreters in the refugee protection context are particularly heavy, and the consequences of errors in communication can affect the refugee's entire life. At JAR's offices, interpreters are asked to assist in the following ways:

- Consecutive Interpretation: interpretation is delivered immediately after the source language is spoken (i.e. one speaker says a few sentences in one language and pauses, then the interpreter immediately interprets to the other in the other language, and vice-versa)
- Sight Translation: an interpreter may be asked to provide oral translation of written documents such as application forms, immigration documents, information release documents, country information, and other kinds of documents.

Because incidents of gender-based violence are common among refugee populations, gender sensitivity is critical. JAR will give consideration to the gender of caseworkers and interpreters where possible. Because incidents of trauma are common among refugee populations, mental health issues may arise. Sensitivity and patience with regard to psycho-social issues is also critical.

Principles of Conduct

Confidentiality:

Interpreters are bound to maintain strict confidentiality concerning any information about an applicant learned during the course of interpretation at JAR's offices, unless required by law. This includes even the identity of the individual assisted. Sharing confidential information can have any number of severe consequences, and the consequences are much greater in the refugee context than they would be in almost any other. Direct and indirect consequences may include: humiliation; retaliation or punitive measures against the speaker, their family/friends by private or public actors; danger to the security of the client and his/her family/friends; new, continued or aggravated persecution; failure of the claim and deportation.

Impartiality:

Interpreters must remain impartial and neutral, unbiased and non-judgmental. The interpreter will not advocate, mediate or speak on behalf of either party or otherwise interfere with the right of individuals to make their own decisions. The interpreter will not influence the opinion of the speaker. If the interpreter is asked by the speaker for his or her opinion in violation of this code, the interpreter shall interpret the question to the other party, and take a moment to explain his or her role to facilitate two-way communication, and not to participate in the dialogue.

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Non-discrimination:

The interpreter shall be respectful at all times and shall not discriminate regardless of race, color, gender, religion, nationality, political persuasion or life-style choice.

Conflicts of Interest:

Interpreters must disclose any and all prior relationship with the parties they are interpreting for, and all prior involvement with the assignment, being careful however not to disclose any confidential information. Interpreters should also avoid unnecessary contact with the parties in order to maintain a clear impartial role.

Accuracy and Completeness:

Interpreters shall interpret with accuracy. Accuracy means conveying the content and spirit of what is said. Proper interpreting will include incoherent, non-responsive, or offensive language, and will interpret the message as stated. 'Guessing' what the speaker has said or what s/he meant is to be strictly avoided. Interpreter's who do not hear or understand what a speaker has said should seek clarification from them. Errors should be raised and corrected on the record as soon as possible. With regard to the quality of interpretation, formal and Informal continuing education and training is encouraged as is accreditation and/or certification.

Opening Statement:

The interpreter or service provider may find it beneficial to give a brief opening statement when meeting with a new client or service provider for the first time. An opening statement may cover the following types of information:

- Everything said will be interpreted, including any side conversations
- Speak directly to each other; instead of "ask him/tell her" address the person directly
- The interpreter will ensure all information shared will be kept strictly confidential
- Please keep your sentences short and pause regularly to allow the interpreter to interpret
- Does everyone understand me? Do you have any questions?

I understand the conditions placed on me as an interpreter. I understand that I may be struck off the list of approved interpreters for violations of this Code of Conduct. I will adhere to this code.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____