Using Interpreters in Forensic Interviews

The interpreter should have basic information about what to expect, including (but not limited to) specifics regarding the nature of a forensic interview, any aids that might be used during the interview, and the physical set-up of the interview room. Please feel free to ask any questions during your preliminary meeting with law enforcement, child protection and CAC staff regarding the forensic interview.

- **Neutral Party:** The expectation in a forensic interview is that the interpreter is a neutral party, is not an advocate for the child and does not try to explain or help the child by expanding or rephrasing questions and answers.

- **Don’t Change Questions:** You should understand that the question or the question structure (i.e., multiple choice, open ended, yes/no) should not be changed. If the question cannot be interpreted directly, the interpreter should alert the interviewer so the interviewer can rephrase. *It is not the role of the interpreter to offer suggestions or attempt to clarify the questions.*

- **Keep it Simple:** You may have more than one way to word a sentence or questions in the child’s native language. Either sentences or questions may convey the same denotative and connative meaning. However, you should select the simplest, shortest and most concrete method.

- **Interpret Everything:** It is not the role of the interpreter to filter information or to decide what is relevant. For example, if the child answers a question with seemingly unrelated information, the child’s words should be relayed and the interviewer can determine their relevance.

- **Caution Against Touching or Gesturing:** If a child attempts to make physical contact with you, the interviewer will attempt to redirect and refocus the child’s attention. Please avoid having children sit on your lap, hugging, stroking a child, nodding your head or gesturing. Although this may seem irrelevant to you, interviewers recognize the significance of these nonverbal communications and their potential implications for suggestibility.
Translator’s Agreement

The undersigned hereby certifies that (s)he is fluent in both English and ____________ languages and competent to interpret conversations and translate documents in both languages.

The undersigned acknowledges the sensitivity of matters to be interpreted/translated, and agrees that all information obtained in the course of interpreting/ translating shall remain strictly confidential.

The undersigned agrees to position himself/herself beside the person being interviewed and refrain from any physical contact with said person.

The undersigned agrees to interpret all conversations and translate all documents verbatim, without paraphrasing. In the event a word or phrase cannot be translated verbatim, the undersigned agrees to define and/or describe said words or phrase and translate same in a manner that most accurately communicates the meaning intended. The undersigned further agrees to interpret only precise words spoken without interjecting comments, explanations, or changes of person/case/tense. For example, if the question is, “How old are you?” and the answer is “Six”, the undersigned should not say, “He wants to know how old you are” or “She says that she is six years old.”

If the person being interviewed does not understand a question, the undersigned will not attempt to explain the question, but will continue to translate only the person’s exact words (I don’t understand” or “I’m not sure what you mean.”) and allow the interviewer to rephrase or explain the question. If the question asked is subject to more than one interpretation, the undersigned will ask the interviewer to clarify the intended meaning to ensure that the correct question is asked. If an answer is subject to more than one interpretation, the undersigned will advise the interviewer of each possible interpretation so that the interviewer may ask additional questions to clarify the answer.

The undersigned agrees to remain neutral at all times and to refrain from engaging in any independent or uninterrupted conversation in the foreign language.

The undersigned does hereby swear or affirm under the penalties for perjury to interpret conversation and translate documents truly, accurately, and faithfully to the best of his/her ability.

_____________________________________________ / ____________________________
Translator Signature        Date

_____________________________________________
Printed name

Translator’s Address: __________________________________________________________

Translator’s Telephone Number: _________________________________________________

CAC Case Number: ______________________________
Interpreter Confidentiality Acknowledgment

DATE: __________________      Case #: __________________

I, ______________________________________, agree to abide by the following guidelines: (printed name of interpreter)

1. I will hold confidential information in the strictest confidence and not disclose the information to any person or in any manner that is inconsistent with the CAC protocol.
2. The confidentiality obligation shall continue indefinitely, including at all times after my association with the CAC.
3. In my role as an interpreter, I will accurately and completely interpret everything said by the CAC staff and client. I will limit my speaking to interpreting unless asked a specific question. I will notify CAC staff immediately of any miscommunication or error in interpretation.
4. I am aware of the need for a totally non-biased and neutral approach at all times while interpreting. I agree to refrain from making any comments indicating my opinions or biases.
5. Failure to comply with the confidentiality obligation may result in disciplinary action by the CAC, such as termination of future relationships.
6. Impermissible disclosure of confidential information about a person may result in legal action being taken against me or on behalf of that person.

______________________________________ ______________________________________
Interpreter   / Date   Witness – CAC staff  / Date

______________________________________ ______________________________________
Interpreter -Printed Name   Witness – Printed Name