

## **Guidelines for Working with an Interpreter**

It is not always easy to know when it is appropriate to use an interpreter. You probably will work with individuals who do not speak English or English is their second language. If you bring in a translator, the following guidelines are suggested.

- Introduce yourself and the interpreter to your group(s). Describe the role each of you will serve. Wait for them to translate.
- Learn basic words and phrases in the language if possible. Most everyone will appreciate your effort even if you struggle. "Please, yes, no, welcome and thank you" are always a good start.
- Avoid body language that could be misunderstood.
- Speak directly to the group and not the interpreter. Look at and listen to the members of the group as they speak or ask questions.
- Use a positive tone of voice and facial expressions. Be sincere and talk to the group in a calm manner.
- Limit your remarks and questions to a few sentences between translations.
- Avoid using slang words or jargon.
- From time to time, check on the groups understanding of what you have been talking about by asking questions. Example: What is the tallest bird in North America in the wild? Avoid asking, "Do you understand?"
- Whenever possible, use materials printed in the group's language.
- Be prepared to spend a longer amount of time with the group. It will take longer to translate and answer questions.
- Have fun! If you are happy to be there the group will feed off of your positive energy and who know you may learn something too!