

Western Australian “I need an Interpreter Card” Information for Communities



If you find it hard to communicate in English, this card will let government agencies know you need an interpreter.

How do I use the card?

Write the name of the language you speak or use on the front of the card in English. If you speak or use more than one language, write the other languages on the card in the order of strongest to weakest. Ask the person who gave you the card to help you with this if necessary.

If you need help from an interpreter when using a government service, show your card to a staff member. They will try to arrange for an interpreter (either in person or by telephone) who speaks your language.

If an interpreter who speaks your first language is not available, the staff member will try to find an interpreter who speaks your second or third language.

Who can get an Interpreter Card?

Anyone who needs help to communicate in English when using government services can get a card.

How much does the card cost?

The card is free. If you lose your card, you can get a new one for free.

Where can I get a card?

Cards are available from migrant resource centres, multicultural community service providers, some public hospitals, schools with Intensive English Centres, some local government authorities, the WA Deaf Society and the Kimberley Interpreting Service.

For how long can I use the card?

You can use your card for as long as you need the help of an interpreter to access government services. It does not have an expiry date.

Can other people use my card?

Anyone who speaks or uses your language can use your card, including your family members.

Can I ask for an interpreter if I don't have a card?

Yes. You can still ask for an interpreter at government agencies even if you don't have a card.

Will I have to pay for the interpreter?

No. If you are eligible to use a government service, the agency will pay for the interpreter.

Can I ask for a male or female interpreter?

You may ask for a male or female interpreter. However, it may not be possible to grant your request.

Can I ask a family member or friend to interpret?

This is not recommended, except for the provision of basic information or in exceptional circumstances.

Friends or family members can be emotionally involved, and may lack the necessary skills and impartiality. Anyone under 18 years of age should not be asked to interpret.

Should I let the service know in advance that I will need an interpreter?

Yes, unless it is an emergency, it is best to inform staff in advance that you need an interpreter so that they can make the necessary arrangements.

What if I don't notify staff in advance that I need an interpreter?

Staff will do their best to help you. For example, they might:

- use an interpreter via telephone, if a face-to-face interpreter is not available
- make a new time for you to visit when an interpreter will be available
- give you information in a language you can read, if it is available, or
- use a staff member who speaks your language, if one is available, to get some basic information, in order to help arrange an appointment with an interpreter.

What can I do if my request for an interpreter is refused?

In some situations an agency may not provide you with an interpreter but may try to help you through other means (for example, by providing information in a language you can read. However, please inform the agency if you are unable to read in your own language).

If you need an interpreter and have asked for one but the agency has refused, you can make a complaint to that agency.

If you are not satisfied with the agency's response you can contact the Western Australian Ombudsman on 9220 7555 or email mail@ombudsman.wa.gov.au. You can do this in your own language.

Where can I use my Interpreter Card?

Depending on what you want to talk about, government agencies must decide each time whether an interpreter must, should or may be used. They are required to use an interpreter where your rights, health and safety are at risk. Government agencies that are more likely to need to use an interpreter include:

- public hospitals
- police stations
- courts and tribunals
- State schools
- public housing offices
- local government offices.

You should also check if your suburb has any doctors and pharmacies that have taken up the offer of free interpreting services funded by the Department of Social Services.

If you are Deaf or hard of hearing, Auslan interpreters are provided for private medical appointments by the National Auslan Booking and Payment Service (NABS) at no cost to you. NABS can be contacted via their website www.nabs.org.au.

Where can't I use my Interpreter Card?

Many businesses and commercial services will not provide an interpreter.

Organisations such as private hospitals and clinics, private schools, private legal services and private transport companies may be willing to arrange for an interpreter, but they may ask you to pay for using the interpreter.

If you are Deaf or hard of hearing, private education providers are required to provide you an interpreter under the *Disability Discrimination Act (Education Standards)*.

Translations of this brochure in several languages, and information about the Western Australian Language Services Policy, are available on the website of the Office of Multicultural Interests at www.omi.wa.gov.au

For further information, please contact the Office of Multicultural Interests, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industriesn 6552 1700.