

Considerations When Assessing Children and Youth of Spanish Speaking Families

The following are recommendations to consider when conducting an assessment on a child or youth of a Spanish speaking family that does not fluently speak English.

1. At the start of the assessment, it is important to provide the parents with basic information about yourself and any other professionals participating in or observing the assessment. This information should include your name, the name of your agency, the purpose of the assessment, and the nature of the assessment. It is important to provide parents with a clear and concise explanation of your work with the child so they can feel respected and comfortable during the assessment.
2. If the assessor is not bilingual (Spanish and English), secure a skilled, professional interpreter. This is critical if the child, youth, and/or family is not fluent in English. Not only would the interpreter facilitate the child's/youth's understanding of the assessor, but the parents would be able to follow along and participate, if needed, in the assessment process.
3. When an interpreter is used, additional time needs to be allotted for the assessment. This allows for interpreting between languages—particularly if interpreting is not simultaneous. Also, there is not a one-to-one translation between English and Spanish. What may be said in four or five words in one language may require more words when interpreted into the other.
4. Give the parents time to process what they hear. Allow them to absorb the meaning. Likewise, wait for the interpreter to finish the idea completely before you resume speaking.
5. If there is more than one professional conducting and/or observing the assessment, the interpreter must be allowed to interpret any remarks and conversations between the professionals. It is not prudent for the professionals to trade comments if the comments are not shared with the parents; this could inhibit the parents' trust in the professionals. Parents, regardless of culture, tend to feel anxious when witnessing or participating in an assessment of their children.
6. Give special consideration to being concise and clear when speaking to the family. Excessive verbal information can be confusing and/or overwhelming. However, if there is any question regarding the family's comprehension of what is said, it may be helpful to repeat the information in a slightly different manner.
7. All professional terms/jargon (e.g., "assessment", "fundus", "intra-ocular", etc.) should be defined for the parents. One effective strategy for this is to prepare, in advance, a list of terms with definitions that has the

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Spanish translation next to the English definition. As a term is used during the assessment, the assessor can refer the parents to the term and definition with its Spanish translation. Parents may be anxious during the assessment, providing them with the written definitions and Spanish translations might be useful to the parents for review after the assessment is completed.

8. Encourage parents to ask questions and make comments during the assessment. Remember that many parents may be embarrassed about asking questions. When an interpreter is involved, the parents may be more reluctant to interrupt and ask questions.
9. Have a genuine respect for the family. When an interpreter is used, it is often easy to direct comments and questions to the interpreter rather than to the family. Be mindful to establish and maintain eye contact with the family. Speak directly to the family; do not speak to the interpreter using phrases such as “Tell them (the family)...”, “Ask them (the family)...”, and so on.
10. Consider working in collaboration with the parents. As a professional, you have theoretical and practical knowledge, however, the parents are the ones who know best the child you are assessing. They observe and interact with the child every day.
11. The results of the assessment must be in both English and Spanish. Spanish makes the results accessible to parents; English enables parents to share the results with other professionals and service providers.