

# Ethics Overview

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## Ethical Standards for Health Care Interpreters

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- NCIHC
  - Code of Ethics
  - Standards of Practice
- IMIA
  - Code of Ethics

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## Ethical Standards for Health Care Interpreters

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Read/follow along:

<https://www.ncihc.org/assets/z2021Images/NCIHC%20National%20Standards%20of%20Practice.pdf>

<https://www.ncihc.org/assets/z2021Images/NCIHC%20National%20Code%20of%20Ethics.pdf>

<https://www.imiaweb.org/code/>

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## Other Ethical Standards

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What ethical standards are you familiar with?

Compare/contrast to health care interpreting standards

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## NCIHC Standards of Practice

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Accuracy  
Confidentiality  
Impartiality  
Respect  
Cultural Awareness  
Role Boundaries  
Professionalism  
Professional Development  
Advocacy

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## NCIHC Standards of Practice

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For each standard:

- Describe in YOUR practice
  - Define the standard
  - Why is it important?
  - What do you do in your practice to follow this standard?
- What does the NCIHC say?
  - Purpose of the standard
  - How to demonstrate
  - Related ethical principle (see Code of Ethics)

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## Accuracy

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### Describe in your own words

- What is advocacy in the context of medical interpreting?
- Why is it necessary?
- What do you do as an interpreter to maintain accuracy?

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## Accuracy

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### OBJECTIVE:

To enable other parties to know precisely what each speaker has said.

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## Accuracy

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- The interpreter renders all messages accurately and completely, without adding, omitting, or substituting. For example, an interpreter repeats all that is said, even if it seems redundant, irrelevant, or rude.
- The interpreter replicates the register, style, and tone of the speaker. For example, unless there is no equivalent in the patient's language, an interpreter does not substitute simpler explanations for medical terms a provider uses, but may ask the speaker to re-express themselves in language more easily understood by the other party.

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## Accuracy

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- The interpreter advises parties that everything said will be interpreted. For example, an interpreter may explain the interpreting process to a provider by saying "everything you say will be repeated to the patient."
- The interpreter manages the flow of communication. For example, an interpreter may ask a speaker to pause or slow down.
- The interpreter corrects errors in interpretation. For example, an interpreter who has omitted an important word corrects the mistake as soon as possible.
- The interpreter maintains transparency. For example, when asking for clarification, an interpreter says to all parties, "I, the interpreter, did not understand, so I am going to ask for an explanation."

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## Accuracy

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### Related ethical principle:

Interpreters strive to render the message accurately, conveying the content and spirit of the original message, taking into consideration the cultural context.

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## Confidentiality

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### In your own words:

- Why is it important
- What do you do to maintain confidentiality in your practice as an interpreter?

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## Confidentiality

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### OBJECTIVE:

To honor the private and personal nature of the health care interaction and maintain trust among all parties.

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## Confidentiality

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- The interpreter maintains confidentiality and does not disclose information outside the treating team, except with the patient's consent or if required by law. For example, an interpreter does not discuss a patient's case with family or community members without the patient's consent.
- The interpreter protects written patient information in his or her possession. For example, an interpreter does not leave notes on an interpreting session in public view.

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## Confidentiality

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### Related ethical principle:

Interpreters treat as confidential, within the treating team, all information learned in the performance of their professional duties, while observing relevant requirements regarding disclosure

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## Impartiality

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In your own words:

- Why is it important
- What do you do to maintain impartiality in your practice as an interpreter?

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## Impartiality

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### OBJECTIVE:

To eliminate the effect of interpreter bias or preference.

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## Impartiality

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- The interpreter does not allow personal judgments or cultural values to influence objectivity. For example, an interpreter does not reveal personal feelings through words, tone of voice, or body language.
- The interpreter discloses potential conflicts of interest, withdrawing from assignments if necessary. For example, an interpreter avoids interpreting for a family member or close friend.

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## Impartiality

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### Related ethical principle:

Interpreters strive to maintain impartiality and refrain from counseling, advising, or projecting personal biases or beliefs.

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## Respect

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### In your own words:

- Why is it important?
- What do you do to demonstrate respect in your practice as an interpreter?

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# Respect

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## OBJECTIVE:

To acknowledge the inherent dignity of all parties in the interpreted encounter

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# Respect

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- The interpreter uses professional, culturally appropriate ways of showing respect. For example, in greetings, an interpreter uses appropriate titles for both patient and provider.
- The interpreter promotes direct communication among all parties in the encounter. For example, an interpreter may tell the patient and provider to address each other, rather than the interpreter.
- The interpreter promotes patient autonomy. For example, an interpreter directs a patient who asks him or her for a ride home to appropriate resources within the institution.

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## Respect

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### Related Ethical Principle:

Interpreters treat all parties with respect.

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## Cultural Awareness

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### In your own words:

- Why is it important?
- What do you do to demonstrate cultural awareness in your practice as an interpreter?

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## Cultural Awareness

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### OBJECTIVE:

To facilitate communication across cultural differences.

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## Cultural Awareness

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- The interpreter strives to understand the cultures associated with the languages he or she interprets, including biomedical culture. For example, an interpreter learns about the traditional remedies some patients may use
- The interpreter alerts all parties to any significant cultural misunderstanding that arises. For example, if a provider asks a patient who is fasting for religious reasons to take an oral medication, an interpreter may call attention to the potential conflict

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## Cultural Awareness

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### Related Ethical Principle:

Interpreters strive to develop awareness of the cultures encountered in the performance of interpreting duties.

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## Role Boundaries

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### What are role boundaries in the context of interpreting?

- Why are they necessary?
- What do you do as an interpreter to maintain role boundaries?

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## Role Boundaries

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### OBJECTIVE

To clarify the scope and limits of the interpreting role, in order to avoid conflicts of interest.

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## Role Boundaries

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- The interpreter limits personal involvement with all parties during the interpreting assignment. For example, an interpreter does not share or elicit overly personal information in conversations with a patient.
- The interpreter limits his or her professional activity to interpreting within an encounter. For example, an interpreter never advises a patient on health care questions, but redirects the patient to ask the provider.
- The interpreter with an additional role adheres to all interpreting standards of practice while interpreting. For example, an interpreter who is also a nurse does not confer with another provider in the patient's presence, without reporting what is said.

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## Role Boundaries

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### Related ethical principle:

The interpreter maintains the boundaries of the professional role, refraining from personal involvement.

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## Professionalism

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### In your own words:

- What is professionalism in the context of interpreting?
- Why is it necessary?
- What do you do as an interpreter to demonstrate professionalism?

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## Professionalism

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### OBJECTIVE

To uphold the public's trust in the interpreting profession.

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## Professionalism

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- The interpreter is honest and ethical in all business practices. For example, an interpreter accurately represents his or her credentials.
- The interpreter is prepared for all assignments. For example, an interpreter asks about the nature of the assignment and reviews relevant terminology.
- The interpreter discloses skill limitations with respect to particular assignments. For example, an interpreter who is unfamiliar with a highly technical medical term asks for an explanation before continuing to interpret.

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## Professionalism

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- The interpreter avoids sight translation, especially of complex or critical documents, if he or she lacks sight translation skills. For example, when asked to sight translate a surgery consent form, an interpreter instead asks the provider to explain its content and then interprets the explanation.
- The interpreter is accountable for professional performance. For example, an interpreter does not blame others for his or her interpreting errors.
- The interpreter advocates for working conditions that support quality interpreting. For example, an interpreter on a lengthy assignment indicates when fatigue might compromise interpreting accuracy.

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## Professionalism

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- The interpreter shows respect for professionals with whom he or she works. For example, an interpreter does not spread rumors that would discredit another interpreter.
- The interpreter acts in a manner befitting the dignity of the profession and appropriate to the setting. For example, an interpreter dresses appropriately and arrives on time for appointments.

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## Professionalism

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### Related Ethical Principle:

Interpreters at all times act in a professional and ethical manner.

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## Professional Development

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### In your own words:

- What is professional development in the context of interpreting?
- Why is it necessary?
- What do you do as an interpreter to grow in your profession?

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# Professional Development

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## OBJECTIVE:

To attain the highest possible level of competence and service.

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# Professional Development

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- The interpreter continues to develop language and cultural knowledge and interpreting skills. For example, an interpreter stays up to date on changes in medical terminology or regional slang.
- The interpreter seeks feedback to improve his or her performance. For example, an interpreter consults with colleagues about a challenging assignment.
- The interpreter supports the professional development of fellow interpreters. For example, an experienced interpreter mentors novice interpreters.
- The interpreter participates in organizations and activities that contribute to the development of the profession. For example, an interpreter attends professional workshops and conferences.

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## Professional Development

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### Related ethical principle:

Interpreters strive to further their knowledge and skills, through independent study, continuing education, and actual interpreting practice.

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## Advocacy

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### What is advocacy in the context of interpreting?

- Why is it necessary?
- What do you do as an interpreter to grow in your profession?

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## Advocacy

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### OBJECTIVE:

To prevent harm to parties that the interpreter serves.

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## Advocacy

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- The interpreter may speak out to protect an individual from serious harm. For example, an interpreter may intervene on behalf of a patient with a life-threatening allergy, if the condition has been overlooked.
- The interpreter may advocate on behalf of a party or group to correct mistreatment or abuse. For example, an interpreter may alert his or her supervisor to patterns of disrespect towards patients.

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## Advocacy

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### Related Ethical Principle:

When the patient's health, well-being or dignity is at risk, an interpreter may be justified in acting as an advocate.

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## Practice Activity: Monitoring Ethics During the Encounter

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- Evaluate the interpreter in this scenario according to the NCIHC Ethical Standards
- 0-2 pts for each standard (max of 20 pts)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=foT9rsHmS24>

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## Practice Activity: Monitoring Ethics During the Encounter

Ethical Standard	Score (0-2)
Accuracy	
Confidentiality	
Impartiality	
Respect	
Cultural Awareness	
Role Boundaries	
Professionalism	
Professional Development	
Advocacy	

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## Monitoring Adherence to Ethical Standards

- What went well? (full 2 pts)
- What needed improvement? (0-1 pts)
- What didn't we see?

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## Group Activity

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- In your group, create a skit.
- Your skit should be based on a challenging ethical scenario you have encountered.
- Choose a patient, provider, and interpreter to act out the skit.
  - If you are in a group of 4, there may also be a family member or additional staff member
- As a group, discuss: Which ethical factor(s) must the interpreter consider? Is there a conflict between standards? How will the interpreter handle the situation?
  - Can be based on how you handled the situation at the time, how you wish you handled the situation, or a mistake you think an interpreter might make.
- You will present your skit to the large group and we will evaluate the interpreter's performance like we did in the practice activity

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## Read More...

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<https://www.ncihc.org/assets/z2021Images/NCIHC%20National%20Standards%20of%20Practice.pdf>

<https://www.ncihc.org/assets/z2021Images/NCIHC%20National%20Code%20of%20Ethics.pdf>

<https://www.imiaweb.org/code/>

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