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## Interpreting — Guidelines for community interpreting

*Interprétation — Lignes directrices pour l'interprétation en milieu social*



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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: [Foreword - Supplementary information](#).

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 37, *Terminology and other language and content resources*, Subcommittee SC 5, *Translation, interpreting and related technology*.

## Introduction

This International Standard was developed in response to a worldwide need to accommodate linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity of people who interact via oral and signed communication. In every nation of the world, there are groups of people who do not speak the language of the majority, regardless of whether they live in their country of citizenship or birth. These linguistic minorities access services through community interpreters, also called public service interpreters (See [Annex A](#) for further details). Community interpreting is essential for members of linguistic minorities who wish to exercise their right to communicate and access services. Community interpreting puts the minority language speaker, who seeks access to a community service, on the same footing as a native speaker of the societal language. The growing cultural and ethnic diversity adds specific challenges to the requirement of delivering services to consumers who do not share the societal language(s). In both urban and rural areas, speakers of the societal language and linguistic minorities communicate effectively, deliver, and access services through community interpreters.

Given the diversity of our world, encounters in which participants do not share a language are becoming more and more common. Community interpreting is a means by which service providers can ensure that the same access to quality of services is offered to all linguistic communities, regardless of their culture or language.

Community interpreting has become established as a professional type of interpreting. There are various codes and standards for specific settings (e.g. healthcare interpreting), but there are currently no universally agreed rules or standards for community interpreters, who are called to work in many different types of community settings.

It is important to stress that interpreting differs from translation as it deals mainly with oral or signed communication rather than written communication. Community interpreting occurs in a wide variety of dissimilar settings and should not be confused with other types of interpreting.



# Interpreting — Guidelines for community interpreting

## 1 Scope

This International Standard establishes criteria and recommendations for community interpreting during oral and signed communication that enables access to services for people who have limited proficiency in the language of such services. Community interpreting occurs in a wide variety of private and public settings and supports equal access to community and/or public services.

This International Standard addresses community interpreting as a profession, not as an informal practice such as interpreting performed by friends, family members, children, or other persons who do not have the competences and qualifications specified in this International Standard or who do not follow a relevant Code of Ethics.

This International Standard is a guidance document. It establishes and provides the basic principles and practices necessary to ensure quality community interpreting services for all language communities, for end users, as well as for requesters, and service providers. Furthermore, it provides general guidelines that are common to all forms of community interpreting. This International Standard is applicable to settings wherever speakers of non-societal languages need to communicate to access services. The settings vary and can include, among others, the following:

- public institutions (schools, universities, community centres, etc.);
- human and social services (refugee boards, self-help centres, etc.);
- healthcare institutions (hospitals, nursing homes, etc.);
- business and industry (real estate, insurance, etc.);
- faith-based organizations (rituals, ceremonies, etc.);
- emergency situations (natural disasters, epidemics, etc.).

Interpreting that enables access to services may include services provided in legal settings (police stations, courts, prisons, etc.) that facilitate equal access to justice. In some countries, legal interpreting, a broad field that includes court interpreting, is not considered part of community interpreting. This International Standard does not supersede national standards or legislation which addresses any sector of interpreting, including court or legal interpreting (See [Annex A](#) for further details).

This International Standard also provides guidance for the provision of community interpreting services. As a result, this International Standard addresses and refers to all parties involved in facilitating any communicative event that enables access to community services, such as members of linguistic minorities, community interpreters, community-interpreting service providers, public institutions, and other stakeholders who provide services to diverse linguistic communities.

## 2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

### 2.1 Concepts related to interpreting activities

#### 2.1.1

**interpreting**, verb

rendering a spoken or signed *source language* (2.4.5) message into a spoken or signed *target language* (2.4.6) in real time