



**WRHA
Health Interpreter Guidelines¹
for
Message Relay,
Reminder Call
and
Conference Call

2011**



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Message Relay

Message Relay involves calling an individual to relay information that has been provided by a third party, such as the details of an appointment (name of healthcare provider; appointment date, time, location; special instructions). Message Relay is performed for each interpreter assignment (unless otherwise indicated or not applicable)

When to perform Message Relay:

- **As soon possible within the 48 hours following the acceptance of an assignment**
- **Try to perform message relay a maximum of three (3) times within these 48 hours at different times of the day if necessary**
- **Avoid calling late at night**

If three (3) attempts at performing Message Relay are unsuccessful, the interpreter should inform her/his supervisor as soon as possible. Language Access will then follow up with the requester.

Any calls that may require in-depth conversation or clarification, or result in discussion and/or questions, require a Conference Call (see Conference Call), and therefore are not appropriate for Message Relay.

Recommended Message Relay Procedure:

The interpreter collects the following information from Language Access Interpreter Services:

- Name of the patient²
- Name of the healthcare provider and the facility/site, program/department/service/agency
- Contact number(s) for the patient (or parents/guardians, etc.)
- Particulars of the message (appointment date, time, location, and/or other information)
- Special instructions to be followed when completing the message relay

When collecting the information the interpreter must:

- Have paper and a pen available to write down the message
- Repeat the message to ensure accuracy
- Clarify anything not understood

² The term patient is used generically to include clients, parents, guardians, and decision-makers.

How to Perform Message Relay:

- Use a **land-line phone** whenever possible and **block the display of your name and phone number** before dialing the patient's phone number:
 - If you have Call Waiting, press *70 to temporarily block incoming calls.
 - Press *67 to block the display of your name and phone number, wait for the beep(s), then dial the number. Call Display Blocking is automatically available to all residential phone lines, free of charge.
- Ask for the patient by name and/or follow the instructions given by the healthcare provider. Never leave a message with anyone else unless the healthcare provider has given that individual's name as an alternate contact (parent/guardian, relative, etc.).
- Ensure that you have contacted the correct person. When you are confident that the patient, or the person you were instructed to contact, is on the phone:
 - Identify yourself by first name only. State that you have a message to relay and are calling on behalf of (give provider's name and location).
 - Ask if the patient has paper and a pen to record the message
 - Relay the message in full
 - Have the patient repeat the message back to you to ensure accuracy
 - Make sure you have given the complete message
- **Refrain from engaging in a conversation with the patient except to clarify what has been said.**
 - If the patient tells you that he/she is unavailable for the scheduled appointment: Advise patient that he/she must contact the healthcare provider to request a new appointment. Indicate that you will advise your supervisor (Language Access Interpreter Services) and that your supervisor will contact the healthcare provider for further instructions.
 - If the patient has any other concerns or questions: Indicate that you are only authorized to provide appointment details (or instructions as given) and that the healthcare provider should be contacted for further information (recognizing that the patient will need language assistance to do so), then politely end the call.
- Advise your supervisor if the patient seems to have difficulty understanding the message (even if you think you know the answer, do not provide information not included in the original message).
- Never leave your phone number or any other contact information with anyone when doing a message relay. The only party who should have access to phone numbers, etc., is Language Access Interpreter Services (if you are asked for your address or phone number, give the name and phone number of your supervisor).
- Politely terminate the call if there are any doubts or suspicions about the identity of the person to whom the message was given, and inform your supervisor.

SAMPLE MESSAGE RELAY SCRIPT (once patient or authorized alternate is on the line):

Hello. My name is (interpreter's first name). I am an English/Farsi interpreter with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and am calling on behalf of (healthcare provider name/title, name of facility/site and program/department/service/agency) to confirm an appointment. Do you have a pen and paper? You have an appointment on (date, time) at (location) with (name of healthcare provider, department, etc.). Please read back to me the information that you have written. The information is correct. Thank you and have a nice day.

Remember to...

- Contact your supervisor if **Message Relay** was unsuccessful or if there is a concern:
 - Inability to relay the message
 - Patient not available
 - Wrong number
 - Wrong contact information
 - Wrong language
 - Message relay concerns
 - Patient did not seem to understand the message
 - Patient unavailable for scheduled appointment
 - Other

If **Message Relay** is being used for **Appointment Scheduling**, follow these steps:

- Collect the details of the appointment
 - Date, time, location (plus two alternate dates and times)
 - Patient name, phone number(s), (or alternate names as applicable)
 - Requester name and phone number
- Call the patient by following the **Message Relay** steps listed on page 3.
- Give the first date and time and ask if the patient is available. If yes, confirm the rest of the appointment information with the patient. If not, provide the second/third date and time as applicable.
- Confirm the date and time with the patient, then end the call.
- Call your supervisor to inform her/him of the confirmed date and time for the appointment.
- Language Access will inform the requester of the confirmed date and time, send the appointment to the interpreter's calendar and fax Interpreter Services Notification form to both the requester and the interpreter.

Reminder Call

Reminder Call involves calling the patient a day or two before a scheduled appointment to remind him/her of the details of an appointment (name of healthcare provider; date, time, location; special instructions). A Reminder Call is performed for each interpreter assignment (unless otherwise indicated or not applicable).

When to perform Reminder Call:

- Call the patient 1-2 days prior to the scheduled appointment
- Try to call a maximum of three (3) times at different times of the day if necessary
- Avoid calling late at night

If three (3) attempts at performing Reminder Call are unsuccessful, the interpreter should inform her/his supervisor as soon as possible. Language Access will then follow up with the requester.

Recommended Reminder Call Procedure:

- Call the patient by following the Message Relay steps listed on page 3.
- Inform the patient that you are calling on behalf of the healthcare provider to remind him/her of an upcoming appointment.
- Contact your supervisor if the Reminder Call was unsuccessful or if there is a concern.

Conference Call

Conference Call involves interpreting a telephone conversation between two or more people who do not speak a common language. Conference Calls can be used to schedule appointments, to follow up or check in with patients, or to provide instructions prior to an appointment, etc. Healthcare providers should place Conference Calls whenever possible, rather than requesting message relay.

Recommended Conference Call Procedure:

- On the day of the scheduled Conference Call, phone the healthcare provider a few minutes before the scheduled time using a **land-line phone** whenever possible and **blocking your name and phone number** before dialing the number:
 - If you have Call Waiting, press *70 to temporarily block incoming calls.
 - Press *67 to block the display of your name and phone number, wait for the beep(s), dial the healthcare provider's number. (Call Display Blocking is automatically available to all residential phone lines, free of charge.)
- Fully introduce yourself to the provider and indicate that you will introduce yourself to the patient once he/she is on the line.
- The healthcare provider should brief the interpreter prior to hooking up to the patient as to the protocol for initiation of contact, i.e. name of patient, what to do if the patient is not the person who answers the phone, whether the healthcare provider or the interpreter begins the conversation or conducts the salutations.
- The healthcare provider will complete the three-way hook up by contacting the patient.
- Ask for the patient by name as instructed by the healthcare provider and ensure that the correct person is on the line.
- Complete your introduction to the patient and when finished indicate to the healthcare provider the conversation can begin.
- Interpret the conversation between the healthcare provider and the patient.
- Terminate the call once advised to do so by the healthcare provider.
- Record the duration of the Conference Call assignment.
- Contact your supervisor if there are any concerns.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN PERFORMING MESSAGE RELAY, REMINDER CALL OR CONFERENCE CALL

- Always block the display of your name/phone number prior to making interpreter calls.
- Follow the instructions provided by Language Access and the healthcare provider. Safety and confidentiality could be compromised if you the interpreter choose to do otherwise.
- Take time to properly introduce yourself.
- Never provide information to anyone other than the person you were requested to contact.
- Never leave a voice message (unless you have received permission from the healthcare provider).
- Never leave your phone number with anyone. If you are asked for a phone number by the patient, give the phone number of the healthcare provider. If the healthcare provider asks for your phone number, provide the name and number of supervisor.
- If you have left the number of the healthcare provider with the patient, let your supervisor know you have done so.
- When performing message relay or conference call interpreting, make sure your environment is a professional one even if working from home. Find a quiet space that allows for privacy and minimal disruptions. Inform others that you should not be disturbed. If you have Call Waiting, block incoming calls (temporarily cancel Call Waiting before you place a call).
- Cell phones are not reliable mediums for the conduct of message relay or conference call interpreting. They are unreliable and carry a lot of interference and background noise. They do not allow for the required degree of confidentiality and privacy. Use a landline whenever possible.
- Public telephones do not allow for privacy and confidentiality. Avoid using public telephones unless otherwise instructed by Language Access to do so.
- Forward the assignment form and any notes to Language Access Interpreter Services as soon as an assignment is completed.

Remember...

All parties have a right to safety, security and privacy.