



## YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO AN INTERPRETER!

You have the right to participate in a legal case involving you, even if you speak little English or no English. Pennsylvania law says that you have the right to a free trained interpreter who speaks your language and English well in court and administrative proceedings. The interpreter can help you communicate and understand the events of the proceeding.

## WHEN CAN AN INTERPRETER HELP ME IN COURT?

You can ask for an interpreter to help you in court for a civil or criminal case. For example, you may request a free interpreter when you are:

- faced with eviction from your home
- the victim of abuse from your spouse
- an employee and wish to sue your employer because he/she has not paid you for your work
- a person with traffic violations
- a person who is being prosecuted for a crime

## WHEN CAN AN INTERPRETER HELP ME IN ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS?

You can request an interpreter for an administrative proceeding about your appeal of an agency decision. The appeal could involve:

- government cash benefits
- food stamps benefits
- worker's compensation benefits
- unemployment benefits
- other benefits from a Pennsylvania agency



## REMEMBER . . .



- You do not pay the interpreter.
- You do not have to bring your own interpreter to the proceeding. The court or agency will provide you with an interpreter.
- You should request an interpreter from the court or agency well before the date of the proceeding.
- Ask for help immediately if you receive a document from a court or agency that you do not understand. Contact the agency that sent the document for help.

# ACCESS TO JUSTICE

*Do you need an interpreter  
for a legal matter?*

## INTERPRETERS MUST BE TRAINED AND NEUTRAL!

An interpreter must be a person who is trained to communicate what people say back and forth in two languages. An interpreter is neutral and is not interested in the result of the legal case. Interpreters do not give advice or explain legal matters. Their primary function is to help you communicate and understand what everyone else is saying. The court or agency hires the interpreter.

An interpreter cannot be the following people:

- a family member
- a witness in the proceeding
- a person who has a conflict of interest (such as the police)
- a child
- a person who is not trained to interpret

## YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REPRESENT YOURSELF

You can represent yourself in court or in front of an agency without a lawyer, even if you do not speak English very well or at all. You should contact that court or agency well before the date of the proceeding. You may have to fill out some documents to get an interpreter. Still, ask for an interpreter if you do not speak or understand English well, so that you can fully participate.

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