

INTERPRETER GUIDE : SUICIDE RISK SITUATIONS



Interpreters sometimes encounter clients **in crisis** during assignments. This document outlines **how to respond appropriately** while maintaining professional ethics and ensuring safety.

Recognizing Warning Signs

Interpreters may hear or observe **cues suggesting suicidal intent**. These suicidal statements can be **direct** or **indirect**.

DIRECT STATEMENTS

(Explicit verbalizations of suicidal intent)

- “I want to die.”
- “I’m going to kill myself.”
- “I’ve thought about ending my life.”
- “I’ve been planning how to do it.”
- “I don’t want to live anymore.”
- “I’m going to take all my pills.”
- “You won’t see me after today.”
- “I’m going to make it stop for good.”



INDIRECT STATEMENTS

(Less obvious but equally serious signs of suicide intention)

Interpreters should treat them as potential risk indicators and interpret them exactly as spoken.

- “I can’t go on like this.”
- “Everyone would be better off without me.”
- “I’m tired of fighting.”
- “There’s no point in anything anymore.”
- “I just want to rest and never wake up.”
- “It would be easier if I wasn’t here.”
- “Soon you won’t have to worry about me.”
- “I feel trapped; there’s no way out.”
- “I’ve started giving away my things.”
- “I’ve been saying goodbye to people.”

Interpreter Role and Conduct



- **Stay calm and neutral.** Do not show panic or judgment.
- **Interpret faithfully.** Convey all words, tone, and meaning accurately.
- **Do not attempt counseling or reassurance.** The service provider is responsible for assessing and responding to risk.
- **Maintain boundaries.** Your role is to facilitate communication, not to intervene directly.

Confidentiality and Duty to Report

Confidentiality is one of the core principles of interpreting. Interpreters must keep all information from assignments private and share it only with the authorized personnel. However, there are specific situations where confidentiality does not apply, and interpreters are required **to disclose what they hear or witness**.

In Canada, interpreters must report immediately if **any** of the following occurs:

- Someone says they plan to kill themselves (suicide).
- Someone says they plan to harm or kill another person.
- Someone mentions or describes child abuse.



Remember: By reporting such cases, you are not breaking confidentiality. You are reporting a safety risk and fulfilling your ethical and legal duty to protect life and safety.

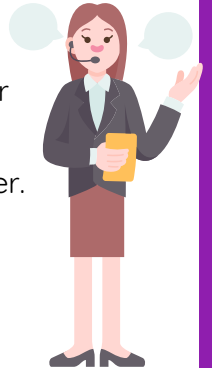
Before the Assignment

If you hear a client **express thoughts** of wanting to **die** or **harm themselves**, report it immediately to the service provider and/or an authorized on-site contact.

During the Assignment

If suicide idea is expressed during the assignment:

- **Interpret the statement accurately and completely** so that the service provider can respond and take appropriate action.
- **Stay present.** Do not leave the call or room until dismissed by the service provider.
- **If remote**, remain online until dismissed by the service provider.
- **Do not share** details with others **except** the authorized personnel (e.g., an IS coordinator or emergency responders).



After the Assignment

- **Debrief:** Notify MCIS IS team at is@mcis.on.ca as soon as possible if you did not get a chance to report the incident.
- **Self-care:** Interpreting a crisis can be distressing. Reach out to **VM team** for support or resources.
- **Do not** discuss the event with unauthorized persons.

IMPORTANT!

If you believe the client is **in imminent danger**:



- **Onsite:** Stay with the service provider until 911 or other help arrives is called (if requested to do so).
- **Remote:** Keep the line open; provide the client's location if known.
- **Always** inform the coordinator or service provider immediately.

PHRASES TO REPORT SUICIDAL INTENT

During the Assignment: The interpreter speaks in the third person, staying neutral.

- “The interpreter would like to clarify: the client just said they want to die.”
- “The interpreter needs to report that the client stated they plan to end their life.”
- “The interpreter would like to note that the client expressed suicidal thoughts.”
- “The interpreter needs to inform you that the client mentioned wanting to harm themselves.”



Before or After the Assignment: The interpreter informs a service provider or a supervisor privately.

- “I need to report that the client said they want to harm themselves before/after the session.”
- “The client mentioned suicidal thoughts outside of the interpreted conversation. I’m reporting this immediately as required.”
- “I heard the client say they were thinking of ending their life. I’m reporting this for safety.”
- “I’m concerned because the client expressed they might hurt themselves. I wanted to report it right away.”

Remember: You are not responsible for the clinical decision. Your duty is to accurately interpret, report immediate risks, and follow safety procedures.