Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines the word **protocol** as a “**system of rules that explain the correct conduct and procedures to be followed in formal situations**”. Protocols establish what is and what is not to be expected from an interpreter and allow for a smooth interpreting session.

We can talk about protocols by commenting on the correct conduct and procedures to be followed by the interpreter before, during and after the interpreting session.

**A) BEFORE THE INTERPRETING SESSION BEGINS (THE PRE-SESSION)**

It is important for the interpreter to establish some guidelines before the interpreting session begins. This is known as “the pre-session”. The interpreter will, 99% of the times, first make contact with the patient before they see the provider. So they should do the following upon encountering the patient:

1) **Greeting**: Tell them your **name**, that you are the **interpreter**, **languages** you interpret in, provide a business card if appropriate,
2) **Confidentiality**: this means that what you interpret you will **keep to yourself (you are after all bound by HIPAA)**.
3) **Completeness**: that you will interpret everything that is said. So if there is something that the patient does not want the provider to know, to please simply not say it during the session.
4) **Direct Communication**: to speak directly to the provider.
5) **Manage Flow**: request that they speak in 2 or 3 short sentences, **pausing frequently** to give you time to interpret.
6) **Intervention**: that you may intervene to ask for **clarification, a repetition**, etc.
7) Is there anything you need to tell me before we begin?

The pre-session with the provider is basically the same.

**Example of a pre-session with a patient:**

Hello, Mr. New Patient, my name is Jane Interpreter, I am a source/target language (ENGLISH/ SPANISH for example) interpreter. I will be interpreting for you during your visit with Provider A. I want you to know that I will keep everything that you say confidential. I must interpret everything you say, so if there's something you don't want interpreted, please don't say it. Please speak directly to the provider and make frequent pauses for me to interpret. I may interrupt if I need to clarify something. Is there anything you need to tell me before we begin?
This take less than a minute to do and makes you look very professional! You only need to do this the first time you are to interpret for a given patient or provider. The pre-session is not always done (ER or over-the-phone interpreting).