



## Language-sensitive counselling: “We understand each other!”

The training concept of the IQ Competence Centre for Work-Related German Language with a clear guideline provides a common communication platform for counsellors and people seeking counselling



### IQ GOOD PRACTICE to the point

#### Addressees for transfer:

Job centres and employment agencies, recognition counselling and counselling on job training, vocational counselling, patient or educational counselling

#### Training concept and guideline:

The training concept and the eponymous practical guide “Language-sensitive counselling - Practical tips” have the objective of providing counsellors with tools, strategies and recommendations for a language-sensitive counselling of clients with German as a second language.

Possible stumbling blocks in the conversation, along with their solutions, are identified through examples. The practical guide contains a collection of speech resources for specific communication situations.

#### Fields of work:

Language-sensitive counselling at the IQ Competence Centre for Work-Related German Language

#### Implementing organisation:

passage gGmbH

#### Responsible for the field of work:

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#### Offer:

The practical guide “Language-sensitive counselling” is available for download under: <http://bit.ly/294nqCY>. Information on dates and scope of training opportunities are available from Tatiana La Mura Flores.

#### Starting position/challenge

Language is the central tool in the daily work of counsellors. In addition to professional counselling services, it is important to deal with a variety of challenges that occur mainly on the verbal level: Complex information must be explained to the clients with German as a second language, and questions must be answered. The training concept “Language-sensitive counselling - Practical tips” and the eponymous handout by the IQ Competence Centre for Work-Related German Language explain how counsellors can use the “language” tool in practice. They were created as an adaptation of the training concept “Language-sensitive teaching” to the counselling context. During the development phase of the new concept, IQ counsellors were asked about linguistic challenges and difficulties in communicating with people with German as a second language. The continuing training “Language-sensitive counselling” emerged based on the needs assessment, and has been offered by the competence centre nationwide since 2013.

#### Implementation of the concept

The training participants reflect on their use of language in counselling and test concrete possibilities for action, how to convey difficult and complex language structures more plainly and intelligibly on the word, sentence and text level. In addition, communication problem areas are identified; then strategies are provided and tested. The handout provides the participants with assistance to revert back to what they have learned and use it in counselling sessions. A daily challenge, for example, is to disclose complex, at times, legally binding information or texts and forms, which are written in “Official German”, to people seeking counselling in person as well as on the phone. Unknown words (“informed consent”, “forthwith”, “signature requirement”) and complex, long sentences with a



difficult set of compounds (“due to”, “as a result of”) complicate the counselling and should be avoided. An important strategy is to simplify words and phrases, repeat them and ask questions. The use of idiomatic expressions should also be avoided, because each person has a very individual approach to images and their “linguistic translation”. An important aspect of the training is also to ensure comprehension, for which the handout provides important notes (particularly to speak clearly and slowly, use formal German, take breaks, emphasise words, and repeatedly ask questions).

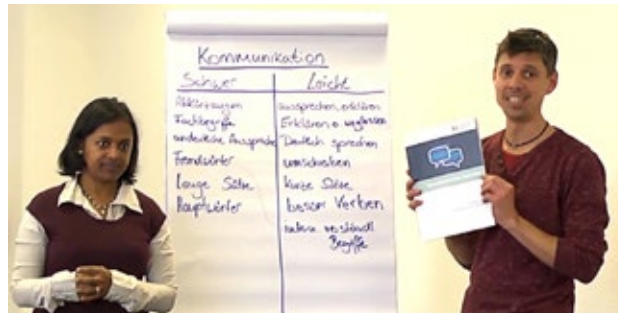
#### Summary

The training and the guideline aim at counselling staff who advise clients with German as a second language. The objective of the continuing training is to provide practical tools, strategies and recommendations to support the counselling work. The handouts are designed to also “function” without the training. Features and strategies of intelligible language in the context of counselling are taught and trained to help participants learn how to mutually understand each other.

# Feedback from practical experience is consistently positive

Already 9,000 shipped handouts and 200 trained counsellors

“One of my favourite tips from the handout is to safely use foreign words such as ‘autonomous’ or ‘documents’ because people seeking counselling often know the root words from their native language. I actually didn’t realise that before”. Michael Gwosdz, head of “Central contact point for recognition” Hamburg, is pleased with what he feels is a “great handout”, which he gladly ordered for his team of five.



Krishna-Sara Helmle and Björn Scherer from IQ project “clever-iq” trained employees at the job centre in the district of Tübingen with the help of the guideline.

These and similar reactions were often received by the project managers of the IQ Competence Centre for Work-Related German Language in recent months; also, the feedback from the field for continuing train-

ing and the handout have been positive throughout. The feedback has underlined that the handout “Language-sensitive counselling” is ideally suited for both linguistic “emergencies” in counselling, as well as the long-term personal development of coun-

sellors in the “client-adequate language” area, and thus represents a real IQ success story. The guide was published in spring 2014 and since then generated strong demand nationwide within IQ, but, in particular, from external institutions, including numerous job centres and employment agencies. So far, about 9,000 copies have been ordered and shipped. The training was attended by over 200 people. The concept has been adopted and incorporated into the training programme in the regional network of North Rhine-Westphalia and Bavaria. The idea was extended to the regional network Hessen and adapted in the tool “Explanatory cards”, another IQ Good Practice example.

Three questions for Tatiana La Mura Flores, responsible for the training concept “Language-sensitive counselling - Practical tips”

## “Raise awareness of counsellors”

### What is the innovative aspect of the training concept?

Features and strategies of intelligible language in the context of counselling are taught and trained using the handout. The handout combines different linguistic challenges and gives examples of practical options for action. The concept is innovative because both the training programme and the handout previously did not exist. The content can be adjusted for different counselling settings. Specifically, this means that counsellors raise their awareness of the following questions: Which language structures are easy, and which are difficult to understand in the context of counselling? How can complex and complicated administrative language be simplified without losing information? How can I ensure an understanding for those seeking counselling? What should be considered in the preparation of information material and assessment notices?

### What makes the training concept transferable?

The handout was developed from practical experience for practical application, the concept was created by a survey of the needs of

recognition counsellors and provides a very low-threshold introduction to the subject. The feedback showed that the concrete examples could also be transferred to the job centres and employment agencies, continuing vocational education and training, entrepreneurship, migration and patient counselling, family planning and school psychological services.

### How applicable will the training concept be in the long-term?

The use of the handout in a counselling context has a significant impact on the quality of counselling. A conscious and reflective approach to language in counselling and in communicating with people seeking counselling with German as a second language is initiated by the continuing training as well as through the handout. The concrete options for action and recommendations provide assistance and can be used and applied in counselling everyday. In the long-term, the handout works particularly well in conjunction with the associated training. Moreover, only few resources are required in the application.

#### Imprint

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[www.netzwerk-iq.de](http://www.netzwerk-iq.de)

#### Network IQ

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