



PARTNERS
Interpreting

How to work with **Sign Language Interpreters**



Who is the Deaf Community?

- Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing people, like any other population, are diverse in ethnicity, education, and backgrounds.
- Deaf people have a culture that is different from the majority culture, the hearing/speaking culture. Cultural differences can influence interactions and communication.
- Most Deaf people do not view themselves as ‘disabled’ and are proud of their language
- Each individual has different ways of communication. There is no one-size-fits-all approach.

ASL

American Sign Language

The language primarily used by Deaf people in the United States is American Sign Language (ASL); many Deaf people acquire English as a second language. Language fluency is never a reflection of an individual’s intellect.



Communication Access

To prevent discrimination and ensure effective communication, places of public accommodation are generally required by federal law to provide auxiliary aids, such as the provision of a qualified interpreter.



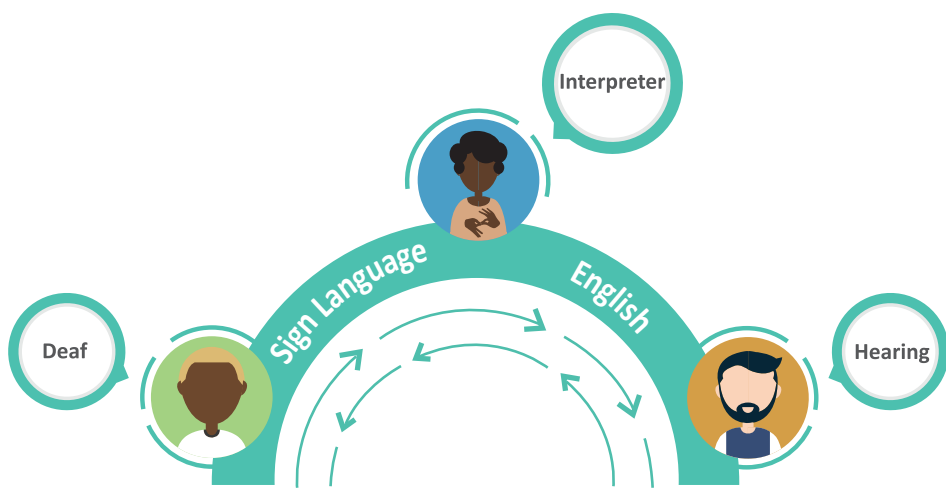
Sign Language Interpreters

Interpreters are professionally trained and evaluated for language and cultural competency. Interpreters are educated in the interpreting process, language fluency, terminology, ethical practices, and decision-making.

Interpreters have the complex task of effectively facilitating communication between Deaf and hearing people. This complex process includes incorporating cultural information and requires a high degree of linguistic, cognitive, and technical skills in both languages. Even when conversation is not happening, an interpreter conveys key environmental sounds and happenings

Interpreters Are:

- Professionals (not volunteers) who undergo years of training in language and cultural competency.
- Guided by a professional code of conduct, including ethics and confidentiality.
- Expected to have appropriate credentials, including industry-specific degrees, screenings, licenses, and certifications.
- Not Helpers.
- Only at the appropriate times can they act as a resource person for access to other Deaf-related services.



The Interpreting Process

The nature and process of interpreting is unique, therefore, depending on the content, an interpreter will sign while you speak (simultaneous) or after you have spoken (consecutive) for the most effective interpretation.

- **When speaking,** the interpreter will absorb part of the message before beginning to interpret.
- **When listening,** a slight delay and moments of silence may take place, allowing for communication/response time.
- There may be more than one interpreter. They will work together and alternate during the assignment, which alleviates mental fatigue and ensures a quality message is being produced.
- Give the interpreter time to finish so that the Deaf person can ask questions or join the discussion.

- 1 Preparation:** Prior to the actual situation, provide interpreters with a brief overview, specialized vocabulary, agenda, materials, handouts and information. When possible, email this information well in advance. Typically, an interpreter will need about 15 minutes prior to the job to look through this information.
- 2 Physical Set-Up:** The interpreter needs to be in the line of sight of the Deaf person. Generally, the interpreter will be positioned next to the speaker and/or visual presentation, across from the Deaf person. Defer to the interpreter and consumer for the physical set-up. Ensure the lighting is ideal.
- 3 Interaction:** Speak directly to, and look at, the deaf individual. The deaf individual will look at both you and the interpreter, but the interpreter will speak to you using the first person. In group situations, identify yourself before speaking so the interpreter knows who is speaking.
 - Speak at a normal pace.
 - Unless otherwise identified, what the interpreter “voices” is from the ASL user.
 - Speak one at a time. Designate someone to facilitate the conversation.





4 Participation: Wait before calling on participants for a response to your questions. Pausing allows the interpretation to be completed and the Deaf person an equal chance to respond.

- It is normal for slight delays in communication during the interpreting process.
- Clear communication takes time.

5 Paperwork: In some instances, the interpreter will translate forms like medical history in the waiting room. Sometimes they will act as a scribe in these instances if written English is not accessible to the Deaf person.



Interpreters will:

- Sign everything spoken and voice what is signed.
- Keep all communications confidential.
- Ask for clarification if the message or vocabulary is unclear or unknown.
- Assess and identify language/communication needs, and suggest options (CDI, tactile, VRI etc.) and share available resources



Interpreters will not:

- Edit the message content.
- Provide counsel, personal opinion or act/speak as a “caretaker” or any other roles (tutor, patient transportation etc.)
- Assist you with watching the classroom, moving the patient, signing forms as a witness, etc.

Keep In Mind!

- Not every linguistic feature is translatable in both English and ASL such as humor, idioms, and phrases.
- Check In: If you are unsure whether the communication is working, ask the Deaf person; as frequent consumers, they are savvy about communication access. What the interpreter perceives as effective may not always align with what the deaf person perceives as effective.

Did You Know?

There are multiple screenings and certifications for sign language interpreters in different settings, such as educational or legal. Regulations and credentials vary from state to state.



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