



How to work with an interpreter

Ensure that the interpreter you hire is qualified.

→ A qualified interpreter is an individual who has been assessed for professional skills, demonstrates a high level of proficiency in ASL and English and has the appropriate training and experience to interpret with skills and accuracy while adhering to the Code of Professional Conduct.

→ Due to impartiality, family members are not qualified to interpret assignments.

Provide details and discuss logistics.

→ To ensure message accuracy, it is important for the interpreter to prepare for an assignment. Provide a copy of any material that will be used during an appointment or meeting (power point, script, notes, agenda, etc.)

→ Clarify any unique vocabulary, such as acronyms or technical terms before the meeting begins.

Be aware of lighting and backgrounds.

→ If lights will be turned off or dimmed, the interpreter needs to be visible

→ Backgrounds that are too “busy” are stressful for those dependent on visual messages. Solid backgrounds without bright light are helpful

Interpreters should be in the Deaf individual’s line of sight.

→ Reserve seats (as appropriate) for the Deaf individual where there is a clear view of both the speaker and the interpreter. Also, make sure traffic in front of the interpreter is kept to a minimum.

→ Be sure to ask the interpreter and the Deaf individual for feedback about where the interpreter should be.



The interpreter will interpret all communication that occurs including all environmental sounds such as pager, telephone conversations, etc.

→ Do not ask the interpreter to censor any portion of the conversation

Speak directly to the Deaf individual, not the interpreter

→ Avoid directing comments to the interpreter

→ Avoid comments such as: “Ask him if...” or “Tell her that...”

→ Maintain eye contact with the Deaf individual. They will be looking at you and the interpreter to receive the message, while reading your body language and facial expressions.

Speak naturally.

→ Talk at your normal pace. Interpreter’s will ask you to slow down or repeat information if necessary.

→ Interpreters are listening for concepts and ideas, not just words, to render a complete, accurate interpretation.

Allow only one individual to speak/sign at a time.

→ If you are facilitating a group meeting and asking people to introduce themselves, be sure to ask that they pause briefly before going to the next person.

→ It helps to have one person designated to MC the meeting so it can keep a continuous flow and organization.



Realize that the interpreted conversation may require more time.

→ In order to ensure a more accurate interpretation, the message might not be instantaneous. It is helpful to wait for the interpreter to convey the message and wait for the response before talking again.

→ Since any individual can not receive more than one visual message at a time, please do not speak while also asking for the individual to read.

Avoid asking the interpreter for opinions or comments about the content of the meeting or information about the Deaf person.

→ Interpreters follow a code of ethics that requires impartiality and confidentiality with all assignment related information.

→ Do not assume that the interpreter has prior knowledge of the Deaf person or will be interpreting future appointments.

Sign language interpreting is physically and cognitively demanding, and interpreters may require occasional breaks.

→ Assignments/jobs that are an hour or more in length, will require a team (or more depending on the details) of interpreters.

Provide the interpreter with as much information as possible, as far in advance as possible

→ This helps the interpreter be prepared for the assignment.

Know that it may be your legal responsibility to cover the costs for an interpreter, as outlined by the Americans with Disabilities Act

→ It is the responsibility of the entity and not the Deaf client to provide and pay for the interpreter.



Know your client's preferred interpreter

→ Deaf individuals have the same rights as hearing individuals to choose who knows their private information.

Sources:

Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH), Raleigh, NC 27699-2301

www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh

Working with Sign Language Interpreters: The DO's and DON'Ts by Lydia Callis September 29, 2014