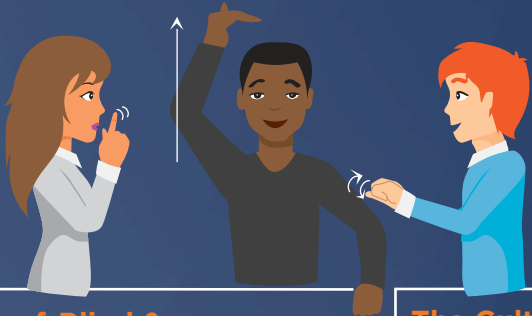


How to Work With a Sign Language Interpreter



Who is the Deaf Community?



Deaf, Deaf-Blind & Hard-of-hearing People -

are unique by ethnicity, education & background. Each individual has varying degrees of hearing loss, communication mode & styles and may also include a person with a vision loss or minimal language. It's best to ask the individual about their communication preferences

The Culture -

within the Deaf Community is different from the majority 'hearing' culture; like other communities, it shapes interactions & impacts communication.

The Language-

primarily used by the Deaf Community is American Sign Language (ASL).

ASL is:

- Its' own language; not just 'gestures'; It's grammatically different than English.
- A visual language; it's seen rather than heard.
- Not universal; used here in the US regardless of the ethnicity of the Deaf individual.

Did you know?

There are misconceptions about communicating with Deaf people.

- **Writing back & forth.** Time intensive; requires the Deaf person to read & write in their non-native language which impacts effectiveness.
- **Lip-reading.** Unreliable & inaccurate. Sometimes a Deaf person may 'speak (audibly) well' but this doesn't reflect the ability to 'hear'. Accents, facial hair and speed of speech impact clarity.
- **'Family/friend interpreter'.** Don't just use someone who 'knows some signs'. Unknown language skills & training + ethical issues such as: confidentiality, conflict of interest & privacy.

Best practice- use a professional, certified interpreter.



Communication Access

To prevent discrimination & ensure effective communication, places of public accommodation are generally required by federal law (ADA, Rehab & Title 6 of Civil Rights Acts) to provide auxiliary aids to Deaf people such as the provision of a qualified interpreter.



ASL Interpreters - Professional trained in language & cultural competency. National certified, guided by a professional code of conduct outlining items such as ethics & confidentiality. Interpreters are there to act as the communication bridge between parties, this includes Deaf specialists known as CDI's.



Role of Interpreters

Primary objective of the interpreter is to establish clear communication. Interpreters assess & identify language/communication needs and may suggest options (CDI, tactile, VRI etc...) and share available resources.

Interpreters will:



- "Sign" everything spoken; "voice" what is signed
- Keep all communications confidential

Interpreters will not:



- Edit the message content
- Provide counsel or personal opinion



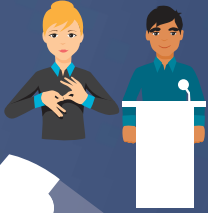
Interpreting Logistics



Preparation:

Prior to engagement provide interpreters:

- Brief topic overview
- Specialized vocabulary
- Agenda/materials
- Information about audio/visual content



Location:

The interpreter needs to be in the line of sight of the Deaf person. Generally, the interpreter will be positioned next to the speaker/visual presentation, across from the Deaf person, facing them.

Lighting:

Sufficient and proper lighting is essential.



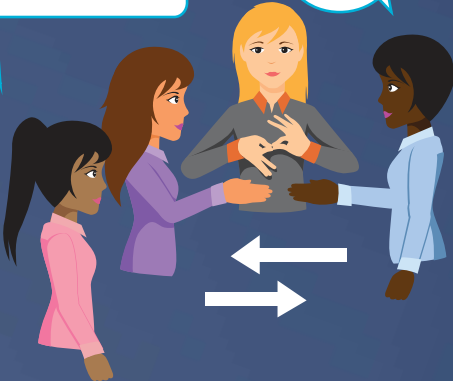
Consider...

- **Participation** - Wait before calling on participants for a response to your questions. Pausing lets the interpreter finish interpreting what you just said and the Deaf person an equal chance to respond in group discussions.
- **Clear communication takes time** - Speaking through an interpreter takes more time than talking to someone who speaks your native language.
- **Pause** - It is normal for slight delay in communication & response time due to the nature & process of interpreting.
- **Checking in** - If you are unsure whether the communication is working, ask the Deaf person; as frequent consumers, they are savvy about interpreting services.

The Interpreting Process

Welcome to our team.

Hi



➤ **How to interact** - Speak at a normal pace, speak directly to the deaf person even though their eyes are on the interpreter. The deaf person will then receive the message in 1st person from the interpreter. Unless otherwise identified, what the interpreter "voices" is from the ASL user.

➤ **Speak one at a time** - Designate someone to facilitate & call on people. This permits the speaker to be identified, allows the interpreter to hear clearly & encourages turn taking.



➤ **Clarification** - If the message or vocabulary is unclear or unknown, interpreters will ask for clarification as needed.



➤ **Reading materials** - Allow time for reading and hold your comments & participant's questions until after they read the material. Deaf people cannot both read & "listen" (with their eyes). Provide handouts for the interpreter too.

➤ **Teaming** - Occasionally interpreters need to work together & alternate during the assignment. Factors include: type of assignment, its complexity, content & duration. This process alleviates mental fatigue & ensures that a quality message is being produced.



Remember...

There are many factors when working with an interpreter.

- Take careful consideration of the nature of the situation.
- Be mindful of what your options are, and the impact it has on everyone (providers & consumers) involved, as every encounter is different.

With awareness, patience & preparation, you will have a successful interaction with Deaf and Hard-of-hearing individuals.



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