



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

BUSINESS PRACTICES: BILLING CONSIDERATIONS

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

BUSINESS PRACTICES: BILLING CONSIDERATIONS

About Business Practices

As the field of interpreting has evolved from an avocation to a profession, private practice interpreters have adopted methods to manage their businesses in a professional manner. The Association describes here what is current, common practice, and offers that as a standard. While the Association expects interpreters to conduct themselves ethically in their business practices, it no way dictates nor restricts what those practices are.¹ Business practices may include but are not limited to:

- contracts
- minimum charges
- compensation for travel, lodging, and related expenses
- no-show situations
- cancellations and reductions

Contracts

The agreement between the hiring party and the interpreter is a contract whether oral or written. Interpreters should make their expectations clear to the hiring party and obtain the hiring party's agreement in advance of the job. The interpreter may use a written contract for longer assignments or for assignments requiring special arrangements such as use of additional interpreters, preparation time, or equipment.

Minimum charges

Generally, the private practice interpreter fixes an hourly rate and charges for a two to three hour minimum. The interpreter may charge a higher rate for more demanding assignments, or for short-notice requests.

When circumstances require the interpreter to make special preparations in advance of the actual interpreting task, the interpreter and hiring party agree in advance regarding compensation for that preparation time.

For situations requiring interpreting for non-continuous periods of time, for the same contractor and on the same day, the interpreter may require payment for the entire block of time.

Compensation for travel

Interpreters may consider a certain area their regular service delivery area, and not require compensation for travel. When an assignment requires travel outside that service delivery area, the interpreter may require compensation for travel. Some interpreters may require compensation based on mileage while others charge for the travel time at their hourly rate for interpreting. Both reflect portal to portal charges. When an assignment requires an overnight stay, the interpreter may require reimbursement for those expenses.

"No-show" situations

When an interpreter contracts for an assignment, commits the time, and appears, the interpreter generally charges for the contracted time, whether or not the other parties show up. The interpreter may negotiate with the hiring party on how long the interpreter will wait before declaring a "no-show" and leaving.

Cancellation or reductions

When an interpreter contracts for an assignment, commits the time, the interpreter charges for that time unless the hiring party has canceled by a pre-agreed cancellation deadline. Cancellation deadlines may vary from twenty-four hours to two weeks, depending on the circumstances of the job. If an interpreter contracts for an anticipated number of hours, but the actual situation requires less time, the interpreter generally charges for the full contracted time.

The Association believes that customary practices that have evolved over many years of trial and error have become the norm for the profession. The Association believes that as interpreters manage their private practices in a professional and businesslike manner, the interpreter, deaf consumers, hiring parties, and the general public all gain a clearer understanding of interpreting business practices.

¹see RID Code of Ethics



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

MENTORING

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

MENTORING

About Mentoring

In the context of the interpreting profession, mentoring is a goal-oriented relationship between two interpreters: a mentor and a second individual, referred to here as an intern, who seeks to learn and grow through association with that mentor. Whether a novice or an experienced professional, within the mentorship the intern is the learner. The mentor has more experience, skill or knowledge, either of interpreting in general, or of some specific aspect of interpreting. Mentoring is not a substitute for comprehensive interpreter education or for the internships and practicums associated with such formal training. Mentoring can augment the training received in academic settings.

Benefits of Mentoring

Mentoring can benefit the intern, mentor, consumers, and the interpreting profession. The intern may experience

- a reduced sense of isolation
- a smoother entry into the interpreting field
- a look at interpreting from another's perspective
- a challenge to continue developing professionally
- strengthening of specific skills or knowledge areas
- real-life interpreting experience with immediate feedback and guidance
- expert modeling to observe and emulate.

The mentor may feel a sense of satisfaction for having

- helped another interpreter grow professionally
- strengthened the field of interpreting
- had one's experience and skills recognized.

Some benefits to consumers are

- an increase in the number of interpreters skilled in a variety of settings
- direct involvement in the professional growth of interpreters.

Some benefits to the interpreting profession are

- evidence that becoming an interpreter requires commitment and training
- more well-rounded professionals in the field.

The Association believes that mentoring is of benefit to the interpreting profession. Each mentoring situation is unique, depending on the individuals involved and the goals of the relationship. Some mentoring relationships are formal arrangements set up and overseen by an agency, RID Affiliate Chapter, or interpreter education program. Others are private commitments between two individuals. Common to all successful mentorships is mutual commitment to professional growth.



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

MULTIPLE ROLES

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

MULTIPLE ROLES

About Multiple Roles in Interpreting

Interpreters work in a variety of settings and situations, many in private practice. That is, they are self-employed, and work on a fee-for-service basis. Private practice interpreters are careful to avoid situations in which non-interpreting duties might be expected in conjunction with an interpreting assignment. The role of these interpreters is singular; that role is to interpret, and to do so in accord with the Code of Ethics of the Association.¹

Other interpreters may hold jobs in which interpreting is one among several types of work included in their job descriptions. Jobs such as this may be referred to as **multiple role jobs**. In multiple role jobs, conflicts may emerge between the interpreting role and other job requirements. The best time to deal with potential role conflicts is before they occur. When a job description for a multiple role position is being developed, job requirements likely to come into conflict with the interpreting role should be considered and resolved. When job descriptions for multiple role positions are already a reality, and are found to produce role conflicts, employers should delineate which role takes precedence. The appropriate revisions should be considered.

Developing multiple role positions

When developing and implementing a multiple role position with interpreting named as the primary role, **include**

- interpreter certification as a desired job qualification²
- opportunities for the interpreter to participate in activities necessary for continuing skill development, professional growth, and certification maintenance³
- a compensation formula that takes into account recommended compensation for professional interpreters and the weight of the interpreting component relative to other components of the job.
- clarification regarding special situations in which the interpreter is part of a support services team which shares a common commitment to confidentiality

When developing a multiple role job description with interpreting named as the primary role, **exclude** tasks that require the interpreter to

- reveal, report, or use confidential information obtained while interpreting
- perform the interpreter role and another role simultaneously
- interpret beyond their competency level
- routinely perform tasks that might exacerbate physical problems sometimes associated with interpreting
- interpret for long periods of time without relief
- be unavailable when needed for the interpreting component of the job.

When interpreting is not named as a primary role, conflicts can still occur. Great care must be taken to inform all parties

- of the role in which the person is functioning
- of the possible future use of the information gained in that situation
- that there may be legal mandates which override the Code of Ethics

Interpreter's credentials

Employers of interpreters will want to employ competent interpreters. It should be noted that the only reliable indicator of an interpreter's level of competence is the interpreter's credentials. The most reliable credentials, and the only ones recognized nationwide, are those issued by the national Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics is the foundation of the interpreting profession. Every employer of interpreters should become familiar with the Code of Ethics, which should have significant influence in the development of multiple role positions.

The Association believes that through multiple role positions, interpreters can be placed in many settings in which the hiring of a full time interpreter would not be feasible or justifiable. While having interpreters in more places means better access for deaf consumers, multiple role positions can result in misunderstanding of interpreters and the interpreting profession. The Association believes that as multiple role positions are developed, respect for and adherence to the standards of the profession will promote understanding and will protect the credibility of the interpreting profession.

¹see RID Code of Ethics, ²see RID National Testing System

³see RID Certification Maintenance Program



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

TEAM INTERPRETING

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

TEAM INTERPRETING

About Team Interpreting

Team interpreting is utilization of two or more interpreters functioning as equal members of a team, rotating responsibilities at pre-arranged intervals, and providing support and feedback to each other.¹

The decision to use a team rather than an individual interpreter generally is based on

- length and/or complexity of the assignment
- unique needs of the persons being served
- dynamics of the setting.

The team process

All team members are constantly active in the team process. They rotate between primary and support roles. Primary roles are directed to the consumers and include tasks such as signing and voicing. Support roles are necessary to enhance the team's performance and include

- monitoring the overall setting
- assuring appropriate and timely transitions
- prompting the primary interpreter.

In team interpreting, interpreters rotate at regular intervals, usually 20 to 30 minutes, while providing continuity in the message transmission. Rotation greatly reduces mental and physical fatigue by allowing a shift of tasks. Continuity is assured as all team members remain present and actively involved, thereby maintaining awareness of the content and context of the information being transmitted.

In some situations, more than one team is required. Factors influencing how many interpreters or teams of interpreters are needed include

- size of the audience
- number of presenters and whether they present individually or as a panel
- whether the audience members are deaf, hearing or mixed
- whether the speakers are deaf, hearing or mixed
- the degree of audience participation
- communication preferences of presenters and audience
- special needs such as tactile, oral, and close visual range interpreting.

To assure quality service delivery, a team will take sufficient time to decide upon the appropriate placement of primary and support interpreters and their respective functions during the assignment. Arrangements for sound system and other equipment or logistical needs should be made in advance.

The Association believes that through team interpreting, presenters, audiences and individuals can receive optimum interpreting services, because interpreters are able to function at their best.

¹see Use of a CDI



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

COORDINATING INTERPRETERS FOR CONFERENCES

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

COORDINATING INTERPRETERS FOR CONFERENCES

People who are deaf are participating more often in international, national, regional and local conferences sponsored by organizations predominantly composed of hearing people. Conference planners face the challenge of making it possible for participants who are deaf to take part in every aspect of conferences. The following information is provided to assist the conference planner in providing optimum services for all deaf participants or presenters who attend the conference being arranged.

The conference needs can include interpreting for people who use American Sign Language (ASL) or an English sign or cued system; deaf-blind people who use tactile or close visual signing; oral deaf people who use speechreading with little or no signing, and other deaf people who may desire assistive listening devices such as an FM or infrared loop system, or live (real-time) captioning.

Advance planning for the conference should include:

- for larger conferences of two or more days duration, a coordinator of interpreting services should be hired as an adjunct member of the conference planning committee
- provide space on all registration forms for a registrant to notify the conference staff of special communication needs:
 - a. interpreter services
 - ASL - American Sign Language
 - an English sign system
 - tactile or close vision
 - oral
 - ethnic/cultural language preferences
 - b. assistive listening devices (ALD's)
 - c. visual assistive devices
 - d. notetaking services
 - e. other (e.g. Cued Speech, Real Time Captioning, Telebraille, etc.).

The deadline date for requests should be a minimum of one month prior to the conference to provide enough lead time for planning of services. The conference can guarantee services only for those registered by the deadline. For late registrants, services may be difficult to obtain on short notice.

Requesting interpreting services prior to the conference allows for the planning necessary to provide a high quality of service. Planning time can be used to obtain the following necessary information:

- presenters' preferences regarding interpreting services
- copies of presentation materials (speeches, songs, poems, etc.) for preview by interpreters
- information regarding the format of the presentations
- information regarding terminology, topic areas, acronyms, conference agenda, and any expected speaker dialects

Selection of interpreters for the conference should be based on the following factors:

- a minimum of two interpreters is necessary for each session a deaf person will be attending. When planning for more than one deaf person in a conference with concurrent sessions, enough interpreters need to be scheduled to allow participants to attend the sessions of their choice¹
- the same team of interpreters (rather than hourly substitutes) should be used throughout the conference as the team will acquire knowledge of the consumers, logistics, specialized vocabulary, and topic areas
- RID certified interpreters should be used whenever possible, preferably those who have prior experience and/or knowledge of the topic or theme of the conference

- ethnic, cultural and linguistic concerns of the consumers should be taken into account in selection of interpreters

Interpreting Policies²

Some issues which should be agreed upon in advance of the conference are:

- What is the cancellation policy for letting interpreters know that they are not needed for the conference, after they have been scheduled to work?
- What happens when more interpreters are scheduled than are needed at conference time?
- What is expected of the interpreter(s) if consumers do not show?
- What is the expected general attire for interpreters?
- What is the arrangement for payment of interpreters?
- What policies apply to overtime for interpreters?
- What are the policies applying to videotaping conference activities involving interpreters?

During a pre-conference site visit, the conference planner or coordinator of interpreting services should attend to the following concerns:

- proper lighting on interpreters
- physical location for the interpreters including a check for:
 - a) a visual background that is non-distracting to the participants
 - b) the ability of interpreters to view consumers and their comments
 - c) elimination of traffic between interpreters and participants
- easy, inconspicuous switching of team interpreters
- adequate, suitably located space for planning of interpreters' logistical needs
- appropriate signage to information and locations

The conference planner should inform presenters on these basic points of protocol for working with interpreters. Presenter and interpreter(s) should meet prior to presentation, when possible, to:

- preview the general content of the presentation.
- preview special content such as jokes, poems, or songs.
- forewarn interpreters of special occurrences that might be alarming or disconcerting if unexpected.

Presenters should not involve interpreters as "models" in demonstrations.

Presenters and interpreters are encouraged to talk at break or between sessions about how the interpreting process is going and make appropriate adjustments.

Coordinator of Interpreting Services

Conference needs may vary depending on size, nature and duration. For a larger conference of two or more days, a coordinator should be hired as an adjunct member of the conference planning committee early in the planning process. The person hired for the position of coordinator should have knowledge of the skills of interpreters as well as the needs of deaf and hearing consumers. The coordinator should be a flexible person possessing excellent scheduling skills as well as a calm professional demeanor.

The coordinator would be responsible for:

- contacting/recruiting and scheduling appropriate, qualified, RID Certified interpreters for the dates and times needed during the conference
- serving as liaison for contracts, payment negotiations, cancellation policies, and payment for interpreting services

- providing entrance credentials, badges, schedules and information regarding sessions for the interpreters upon their arrival at the site
- deploying interpreters according to need
- arranging last minute substitutions or changes
- providing technical and logistical assistance to the conference personnel
- acting as the contact person for interpreters, consumers and/or conference personnel
- problem solving or putting out “fires”
- coordinating with other language interpreters
- providing post-conference reports, summaries and final report on expenses as requested by the conference planning committee

The coordinator of interpreting services and the conference interpreters might be hired through an interpreter service agency. If the coordinator is also an interpreter, it is best that this person not be scheduled for interpreting duties but be available for contact at all times through a pager system.

The Association believes that the planning for and use of skilled conference interpreters provides optimum services for the needs of deaf and hearing consumers alike who attend the conference. The conference planner can enhance the provision of equal access to all conference proceedings through this good use of qualified conference interpreters.

TIMELINE FOR SCHEDULING CONFERENCE INTERPRETING SERVICES					
Activity	2-3 mo	1 mo	2 wks	On site	2wk Post
Hire Interpreter coordinator	●				
Secure names of interpreters		●			
Mail contracts to interpreters		●			
Registration requests received		●			
Contracts returned			●		
Written presentations/songs/audio tapes to interpreters			●		
Names of deaf participants			●		
Cancellation of services			●		
Conference logistics				●	
Payment to interpreters					●
Post-conference meeting to evaluate services					●

RID has a series of Standard Practice Papers available upon request. Footnotes frequently reference these materials.

¹see *Team Interpreting* and *Use of a CDI*

²see *Business Practices: Job Billing*



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

CUMULATIVE MOTION INJURY

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

CUMULATIVE MOTION INJURY

Cumulative Motion Injury (CMI), also called Cumulative Trauma Disorder, Repetitive Motion Injury, Repetitive Use Injury, or Repetitive Stress Disorder, can occur in sign language interpreters who perform the same rapid motions multiple times during a work day. Activities that require forceful, speedy, repeated movements, combined with awkward postures and insufficient rest time between movements put interpreters at greatest risk for injuries. The most common injuries are to the wrist (carpal tunnel syndrome), the arm (tendinitis), the shoulder (bursitis) and the back. Cumulative Motion Injury has the potential to prematurely remove people from employment in the sign language interpreting field. Years of education, training and experience may be lost to the practicing interpreter, consumers and employer.

Although Cumulative Motion Injury has traditionally been associated with workers in manufacturing or computer related jobs, doctors are now seeing an increase incidence of such injuries among sign language interpreters. Some causes of Cumulative Motion Injury are:

- forceful, speedy, repeated movements,
- awkward hand positions and postures,
- insufficient rest time between movements,
- insufficient time for warm up and cool down of muscles,
- insufficient rest time between periods of intense work,
- tight muscles in arms and upper body during work time.

Cumulative Motion Injury usually begins as body parts intended to move smoothly together begin to drag against each other. The friction causes tiny tears in muscles and tendons which then become inflamed. As the tears heal, scar tissue forms causing body parts to drag even more against each other. The continuous, repeated friction causes stiffness and pain and inflammation. In the early stages, the pain and stiffness may be reduced when the activity is diminished or go away when the activity is discontinued overnight or for a few days. As the condition grows worse, relief requires longer and longer periods of rest, and the symptoms may recur more quickly on recommencing the activity. In many cases, the symptoms persist and medical attention is required. If the activity is continued without proper treatment and rest, nerve damage results in numbness, loss of strength and flexibility and chronic pain.

Employers concerned about the health and safety of employees can help the interpreter avoid injury. Some preventative measures the employer may take in consultation with the interpreter are:

- provide 15 minutes of rest or alternative work for each one-and-a-half to two hours of interpreting.
- utilize more than one interpreter for sessions exceeding one-and-a-half hours.¹
- consider diversification of work duties to include those which do not require use of the same major muscle groups.²
- provide educational opportunities for the interpreter to learn use of preventative techniques and early recognition of problems.
- work with the interpreter to analyze the work site to identify and eliminate, when possible, "stressors" such as standing in the same place for a long time, sitting in chairs which are not ergonomically designed, being exposed to extremes in temperature, and assuming awkward positions to interpret.
- avoid continuous interpreting with heavy work output requiring intense concentration for long periods of time. The amount of time which should be spent in actual interpreting may vary from one job to another.

Since continuous work with little or no breaks can be a strong factor in the onset of ³CMI, interpreters should take the initiative in working with employers in identifying and preventing problems by:

- not working lengthy interpreting situations alone.
- ensuring sufficient breaks in their work day.
- not working too many hours in a single day.

Some specific preventative measures interpreters may take are:

- educate the employer in the use of preventative techniques and early recognition of problems.
- use a less forceful signing style or fingerspelling with the hand orientation turned slightly in, rather than fully facing the consumer(s).
- do stretching and range of motion exercises for body and hands.
- do strengthening exercises for arms and hands.
- consider alternative preventive and treatment approaches such as therapeutic massage, chiropractic manipulation, paraffin baths, and acupuncture.

There is no one treatment or relief for many of the symptoms of Cumulative Motion Injury(s). Far superior to treatments, prevention of CMI is the best choice for interpreters. A life style for health and fitness combined with prudent work habits can reduce the interpreter's chances of suffering this potentially debilitating condition. Measures employers take to prevent the occurrence of CMI are well worth the costs. Improved performances and bolstered morale can actually reduce employer costs for substitutes, worker's compensation, and health insurance. Working together, employer and interpreter can insure a safe working environment in which the interpreter can work effectively and without risk of Cumulative Motion Injury.

The Association believes that through cooperation with employers, appropriate education, and preventative techniques, the interpreter's years of education, training and experience will not be lost because of Cumulative Motion Injury.

RID has a series of Standard Practice Papers available upon request. Footnotes frequently reference these materials.

¹see *Team Interpreting*

²see *Multiple Roles*

³RID *VIEWS* Vol. 13, Iss. p14



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

INTERPRETING IN MEDICAL SETTINGS

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

INTERPRETING IN MEDICAL SETTINGS

In medical settings, effective communication between consumers and health care professionals is essential. When the health care professional and the consumer do not share a common language or communication method, communication presents a challenge. The communication gap may be between the medical professional and a patient who is deaf or between the medical professional and a responsible person other than the patient, such as the deaf parent of a minor child or the deaf adult responsible for an aging parent. A qualified RID interpreter can bridge the communication gap between medical professionals and those they serve.

Health Care Professionals Using Interpreters

The health care professional in need of an interpreter may have several questions.

How do I know an interpreter will be needed? The deaf patient (or family member) should inform you of the need for an interpreter when making an appointment or when receiving services. It is important to remember, the health care professional and the patient should work together to ensure that the necessary accommodations are provided.

Who is responsible for arranging interpreter services? Health care providers are responsible for providing “auxiliary aids and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure that communication with people who are deaf is as effective as communication with others. Federal regulations define “auxiliary aids” to include interpreters.¹ Adapting scheduling procedures may be necessary in order to provide an interpreter; for example, a walk-in clinic, where appointments are usually not made, might have to make an appointment. The health care provider cannot legally charge a patient for the interpreter services

For what types of care should I provide interpreter services? An interpreter should be present in all situations in which the information to be exchanged requires effective communication, such as taking a medical history, explaining tests, procedures and diagnoses, planning treatment, providing discharge instructions and scheduling follow-up care.²

For what services and programs should I provide an interpreter? You will want all services and programs you provide to be available and accessible equally to consumers who are deaf and hearing. For example, a deaf individual might wish to take a childbirth class, access a substance abuse program, obtain psychiatric services or attend a free lecture on health care.

How do I find a qualified interpreter? You can engage a private practice interpreter directly or through an interpreter service agency. You will have most assurance of quality by hiring an RID certified interpreter. Interpreters certified by RID have demonstrated skills related to language and communication, as well as knowledge and practice of ethics and professionalism. To be effective, the interpreter’s communication must be compatible with that of the deaf individual; therefore, it is important that the deaf individual be consulted on the choice of interpreter. For this reason an individual who is deaf may decline to use a specific interpreter. Ethnic, cultural, and linguistic concerns of the patient and family members should be considered in the selection of an interpreter. Prior to hiring, the health care professional should inquire about the credentials of an interpreter.³

Why not use a family member as interpreter? While using a family member may seem logical and convenient, it is not advisable, for several reasons. You have no assurance the family member’s language skills are adequate for communicating medical information. The relative may have attitudinal or emotional issues that could affect objectivity and impartiality and prevent accurate communication. For example, a family member might feel compelled to “protect” the patient from painful news, or to withhold potentially embarrassing information. Using a family member may compromise the patient’s right to privacy and confidentiality.

Why not use a person on staff who knows sign language? Unless the staff person is an RID certified interpreter, you have no assurance that communication will be effective and accurate. Inaccurate or incomplete communication in general can cause greater risk than no communication. This may jeopardize patient care and become a liability issue.

What about emergencies? In emergency health care, it may not always be possible to immediately provide a specific type of communication accommodation. However, you will want to provide the most effective communication as soon as possible. To reduce delays in acquiring an interpreter, make sure emergency and crisis staff know the policy and procedures for requesting an interpreter for all hours the facility is open. Also, maintaining phone numbers of qualified private practice interpreters and interpreter service agencies can reduce delays in acquiring interpreters on short notice. Following an established policy or procedure for effective communication with individuals who are deaf is vital to emergency patient care.

Where can I learn more about providing services for patients who are deaf? A booklet, *ADA Questions and Answers for Health Care Providers*, is available from the National Academy, Gallaudet University, 800 Florida Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20002-3695.

What do I need to do in order to work effectively with an interpreter? As you work with an interpreter, you can facilitate communication in several ways:

- Work with the interpreter and the deaf individual to determine the best possible placement for all parties in the situations.
- Speak directly to the individual who is deaf rather than saying to the interpreter, “Ask him...” or “Tell her...”
- Realize that the interpreter cannot provide any information or opinions about the patient.
- Expect that the interpreter may occasionally pause to ask you for an explanation or clarification of terms in order to provide an accurate interpretation.
- Recognize that the interpreter is responsible to interpret all that is said in the presence of all individuals and will not edit out anything spoken as an aside or anything that is said to others in the room.

Can I be confident the patient’s right to confidentiality will not be violated? An RID interpreter adheres to a Code of Ethics of which confidentiality is a fundamental tenet and may be covered by the “cloak of privilege” when interpreting for a professional who has legal privilege.

Will the interpreter have safety concerns? As interpreters become part of the health care scene, they may have questions and concerns about their personal safety. The medical professional can help the interpreter by answering questions, by offering guidance regarding universal precautions, sharing action plans for volatile behaviors, and by providing appropriate protective equipment and clothing.

The Association believes that effective communication is essential to quality health care. By using qualified RID interpreters, health care professionals can do their best to provide the same standard of care to individuals who are deaf as to those who are not deaf.

RID has a series of Standard Practice Papers available upon request. Footnotes frequently reference these materials.

¹see 45 Code of Federal Regulations 84.52(d)1,3 and 28 C.F.R. 36.30(c)

²see *Professional Sign Language Interpreting, Use of a CDI* and *ADA questions and Answers for Health Care Providers*, National Center for Law and Deafness

³see RID information on Certification



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

PROFESSIONAL SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

PROFESSIONAL SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING

What is interpreting?

Interpreting, simply stated, is receiving a message in one language and delivering it in another. Not as simple as it sounds, interpreting is a complex process that requires a high degree of linguistic, cognitive and technical skills.

Professional sign language interpreters develop interpreting skills through extensive training and practice over a long period of time. Interpreters continue to actively improve their skills, knowledge, and professionalism through membership in RID. An increasing number of interpreters have completed college or university interpreter education programs, earning associates, bachelors, and/or masters degrees in interpreting. Some interpreters have also obtained advanced degrees in related fields such as linguistics or cultural studies.

Sign language interpreting is a highly specialized field; simply knowing both sign language and English does not qualify a person as an interpreter. The professional sign language interpreter is able to adjust to a broad range of deaf consumer preferences and/or needs for interpretation. Some deaf individuals use American Sign Language, a natural language with its own grammar and structure that is distinct from English. Others prefer a form of signing that more closely follows the grammar and structure of spoken English. The professional interpreter is expected to work comfortably along this wide spectrum. Sometimes it is necessary to have two or more interpreters working simultaneously in order to satisfy the preferences and needs of a varied audience.¹ On occasion, one of the interpreters may be a deaf individual² or a person fluent in a language other than English or American Sign Language. Interpreters should be aware of and sensitive to ethnic/cultural and linguistic concerns.

Where professional interpreters work

Interpreters work in a variety of settings and situations. Many interpreters work in private practice; they are self-employed. From scheduling assignments to handling billing, the interpreter is responsible for all business aspects.³ The private practice interpreter may also receive assignments through interpreter service agencies. Others interpreters are salaried staff of an agency, institution, or corporation.⁴ Still others interpret in educational settings—from pre-school to graduate school and any level in between. Interpreters work in settings as intimate as a private therapy session or as public as a televised address at a national political convention. The interpreter must be a versatile, flexible, skilled professional.

Interpreter Ethics

Professional interpreters adhere to the RID Code of Ethics. This Code, shown on the final page of this brochure, holds interpreters to a high level of professionalism in matters of interpretation and business practices.

Interpreting Credentials

In the field of interpreting, as in other professions, appropriate credentials are an important indicator of an interpreter's qualifications. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) awards certification to interpreters who successfully pass national tests. The tests assess not only language knowledge and communication skills, but also knowledge and judgment on issues of ethics, culture and professionalism. An interpreter may hold one or more certifications. Information on certifications is available from RID.

Some common sign language interpreting certifications are:

- CI - Certificate of Interpretation
- CT - Certificate of Transliteration
- CSC - Comprehensive Skills Certificate
- SC:L - Specialist Certificate: Legal
- IC - Interpretation Certificate
- TC - Transliteration Certificate
- CDI - Certified Deaf Interpreter

To verify an individual interpreter's current certification status, contact the Association's national office.

The Association has played the leading role in establishing a national standard of quality for interpreters and is committed to continued professionalism in the practice of sign language interpretation. Local interpreter service agencies, individual interpreters or the Association's national office can provide information on certified interpreters and interpreting throughout the United States.

RID has a series of Standard Practice Papers available upon request. Footnotes frequently reference these materials.

¹see *Team Interpreting*

²see *Use of a CDI*

³see *Business Practices: Billing Considerations*

⁴see *Multiple Roles*



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

USE OF A CERTIFIED DEAF INTERPRETER

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

USE OF A CERTIFIED DEAF INTERPRETER

About the CDI

A Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) is an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing and has been certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf as an interpreter.

Specialized training and/or experience

In addition to excellent general communication skills and general interpreter training, the CDI may also have specialized training and/or experience in use of gesture, mime, props, drawings and other tools to enhance communication. The CDI has an extensive knowledge and understanding of deafness, the deaf community, and/or Deaf culture which combined with excellent communication skills, can bring added expertise into both routine and uniquely difficult interpreting situations.

Meeting special communication challenges

A Certified Deaf Interpreter may be needed when the communication mode of a deaf consumer is so unique that it cannot be adequately accessed by interpreters who are hearing. Some such situations may involve individuals who:

- use idiosyncratic non-standard signs or gestures such as those commonly referred to as “home signs” which are unique to a family
- use a foreign sign language
- have minimal or limited communication skills
- are deaf-blind or deaf with limited vision
- use signs particular to a given region, ethnic or age group
- have characteristics reflective of Deaf Culture not familiar to hearing interpreters.

The CDI at Work

As a team member

Often a Certified Deaf Interpreter works as a team member with a certified interpreter who is hearing. In some situations, a CDI/hearing interpreter team can communicate more effectively than a hearing interpreter alone or a team of two hearing interpreters or a CDI alone. In the CDI/hearing interpreter team situation, the CDI transmits message content between a deaf consumer and a hearing interpreter; the hearing interpreter transmits message content between the CDI and a hearing consumer. While this process resembles a message relay, it is more than that. Each interpreter receives the message in one communication mode (or language), processes it linguistically and culturally, then passes it on in the appropriate communication mode. In even more challenging situations, the CDI and hearing interpreter may work together to understand a deaf individual's message, confer with each other to arrive at their best interpretation, then convey that interpretation to the hearing party.

For Deaf-Blind individuals

When a consumer who is deaf-blind is involved, the CDI may receive a speaker's message visually, then relay it to the deaf-blind individual through the sense of touch or at close visual range. This process is not a simple relay in which the CDI sees the signs and copies them for the person who is deaf-blind. The CDI processes the message, then transmits it in the mode most easily understood by the individual who is deaf-blind.

Solo

The CDI sometimes works as the sole interpreter in a situation. In these instances, the CDI may use sign language or other communication modes that are effective with a particular deaf individual; and may use, with the hearing consumer, a combination of speech, speech reading, residual hearing, and written communication.

On the platform

The CDI sometimes functions as interpreter before an audience. This may involve the CDI watching a hearing interpreter and restating the message to the audience in a different sign mode. At

other times, the CDI may be in front of the audience to “mirror” comments or questions from a signing member of the audience so that the rest of the audience can see them.

Benefits of using a Certified Deaf Interpreter are:

- optimal understanding by all parties
- efficient use of time and resources
- clarification of linguistic and/or cultural confusion and misunderstanding(s)
- arrival at a clear conclusion in the interpreting situation.

The Association believes that when use of a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) is appropriate, the CDI and a certified interpreter who is hearing can function as a highly effective team to provide quality communication access for everyone involved.



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

INTERPRETING IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS (K-12)

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

INTERPRETING IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS (K-12)

Following the passage of a number of laws concerning the education of deaf children, educational interpreting has become more common in elementary and secondary schools. This is a growing profession and can be one way of making school programs and services more accessible to children who are deaf. As a member of the educational team, the interpreter should be an educated and qualified professional.

What is the role of the educational interpreter?

The fundamental role of an interpreter, regardless of specialty or place of employment, is to facilitate communication between persons who are deaf and hard of hearing and others. Educational interpreters facilitate communication between deaf students and others, including teachers, service providers, and peers within the educational environment. Many educational environments have a communication policy which should be clearly defined to the interpreter applicant. The educational team may be composed of school personnel and parents and may be more structured in some school districts than others. The educational interpreter is a member of the educational team and should be afforded every opportunity to attend meetings where educational guidelines are discussed concerning students who are provided services by that interpreter.

What responsibilities are appropriate for an educational interpreter?

Interpreting is the primary responsibility of the interpreter. The interpreter may perform this responsibility in a variety of settings, in and outside of the classroom including:

- instructional activities
- field trips
- club meetings
- assemblies
- counseling sessions
- athletic competitions

Interpreting is the educational interpreter's primary role, and must take priority over any other demands. In some schools, interpreters may also interpret for deaf parents, deaf teachers, and other deaf employees.

- Interpreters may have additional responsibilities when not interpreting.¹ In determining appropriate responsibilities, it is important to utilize specialized competencies and skills of the interpreter and assign only those responsibilities for which the interpreter is qualified.

Responsibilities that maximize the interpreter's effectiveness during non-interpreting periods of time might include:

- planning and preparing for the interpreting task
- presenting in-service training about educational interpreting
- working with teachers to develop ways of increasing interaction between deaf students and their peers
- if qualified, tutoring the student who is deaf or hard of hearing
- if qualified, teaching sign language to other school staff and to pupils who are not deaf

Responsibilities that tend to reduce the interpreter's effectiveness may include:

- copying and filing
- playground supervision
- bus attendant duty
- lunchroom duty
- monitoring study hall

The educational interpreter's responsibilities and the relative proportion of time between interpreting and non-interpreting responsibilities are likely to vary from one work setting to another and may be influenced by a number of factors which may include:

- number of students who are deaf or hard of hearing in the school or district and distribution across grade levels and school buildings
- possibility of physical injury due to stress or overuse.²
- nature of the employment; full-time, part-time, or hourly
- interpreter's background, knowledge, skill, and competencies
- qualifications and availability of the interpreting staff

How can confusion about the interpreter's responsibilities be avoided?

The role and responsibility of the interpreter is distinct from that of the teacher and that of other professionals in the educational setting. This distinction must be kept clear. For example, for the interpreter to provide classroom instruction and discipline directly to a student would be inappropriate because that is the teacher's responsibility.

A clear and detailed job description, prepared in advance of hiring and shared with the interpreter applicant and with others who need to understand the interpreter's duties, will help avoid confusion and misunderstanding.

Who should supervise the educational interpreter?

A member of the educational administration staff who has an understanding of interpreting should supervise the interpreter. In most cases, hiring an agency outside the educational institution or using a teacher in whose class the educational interpreter works would not be appropriate. The interpreter's supervisor may have interpreting skills, which is valuable, but the supervisor should at least know what interpreting is, how the interpreter functions best as a member of the educational team, and when interpreting is or is not the most appropriate service. If the supervisor is not qualified to evaluate interpreting skills or performance, an outside consultant knowledgeable in interpreter assessment and skill development should be hired.

What qualifications should the educational interpreter have?

Interpreting is a highly specialized professional field; simply knowing sign language does not qualify a person as an interpreter. Professional sign language interpreters develop their specialization through extensive training and practice over a long period of time. In addition, skills in oral transliteration may be needed. Throughout their careers, interpreters improve their skills, knowledge, and professionalism through continued training and through participation in RID. The use of a comprehensive written professional development plan will guide the educational interpreter to meet professional goals, including that of certification.

In interpreting, as in other professions, appropriate credentials are an important indicator of competence. RID awards certification to interpreters who successfully pass national tests. The tests assess not only language knowledge and communication skills, but also knowledge and judgment on issues of ethics, culture and professionalism which form the essential foundation for quality interpreting. The assessments do not test for additional specialist skills necessary in educational settings. Many interpreters working in educational settings either already have or are working toward certification. An increasing number of states are requiring educational interpreters to have interpreting credentials.

Educational interpreting is a specialty requiring additional knowledge and skills. In the classroom, the instructional content varies significantly, and the skills and knowledge necessary to qualify an interpreter vary accordingly. In the primary grades, the interpreter needs a broad basic knowledge of the subject areas such as mathematics, social studies, and language arts, and should have an understanding of child development. At the secondary level, the interpreter needs sufficient knowledge and understanding of the content areas to be able to interpret highly technical concepts and terminology accurately and meaningfully.

How is reasonable compensation determined for the educational interpreter?

Pay levels and employee benefits for educational interpreters should be competitive with that of other professional school employees. They should be based on interpreting skills, education, experience, certification, performance, and job responsibilities. Creation of positions with appropriate pay and benefits is a key to attracting and keeping qualified professional interpreters.

How does the RID Code of Ethics apply to educational interpreters?

The RID Code of Ethics is the statement of ethical principles for all interpreters, including those who work in educational settings. Within the boundaries of the educational team, the Code of Ethics deals fairly with the major issue of confidentiality.

Where can I learn more about educational interpreting?

The National Task Force on Educational Interpreting published a report entitled "Educational Interpreting for Deaf Students" which can be obtained from Rochester Institute of Technology, National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

The Association believes that educational interpreting is one way of making school programs and services more accessible to children who are deaf. The educational interpreter should be an RID certified, highly trained and qualified professional who can function as a member of the educational team.

RID has a series of Standard Practice Papers available upon request. Footnotes frequently reference these materials.

¹see Multiple Roles

²see Cumulative Motion Injury



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

INTERPRETING IN MENTAL HEALTH SETTINGS

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

INTERPRETING IN MENTAL HEALTH SETTINGS

In mental health assessment, testing and treatment, effective communication is essential. When two languages and cultures are involved, communication presents the mental health professional with additional challenges. This is often the case when a patient or a significant person in the patient's life is deaf and uses sign language. The deaf individual in need of mental health services may be served most effectively by a mental health professional who is deaf and/or is fluent in sign language and has specialized training in mental health and deafness. When such specialized services are not available, the communication challenge may be met effectively through use of qualified interpreters. Interpreters who specialize in mental health interpreting are available in some areas.

What is the interpreter's role?

The interpreter's primary role is to facilitate communication.¹ This role may be performed through a variety of methods appropriate to the communication needs of the deaf person. The interpreter can provide information and opinions related to the communication process, but not on the therapeutic process. The interpreter can provide appropriate general information on issues of Deaf culture, but cannot provide information about the mental and emotional state of the deaf person.

How can I find a qualified interpreter?

You can engage a private practice interpreter directly or through an interpreter service agency. The most reliable indicator of an interpreter's level of competence is the interpreter's credentials. The most widely recognized interpreting credentials are those issued by the national Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). By passing rigorous tests, interpreters certified by RID have demonstrated not only proficiency in interpreting, but also knowledge of professional ethics and Deaf culture.² RID certified interpreters continually upgrade their skills and knowledge by participating in professional workshops and conferences. Hiring certified interpreters who specialize in mental health interpreting is advisable.

To be effective, the interpreter's communication must be compatible with that of the deaf individual. Issues for which treatment is sought, and other issues such as ethnic, cultural, gender, and linguistic concerns of the patient or family members may affect their preference in interpreters. For this reason, it is important to consult the deaf individual on the choice of interpreter, unless circumstances of the case make doing so impractical. In many instances, you will need more than one interpreter.³ A Certified Deaf Interpreter may be required.⁴ Using the same interpreter or interpreter team throughout a treatment program is encouraged for maximum effectiveness.

Why not use a family member as an interpreter?

While using a deaf person's family member may seem logical and convenient, it is not advisable for several reasons:

- The relative may have attitudinal or emotional issues that could affect objectivity and impartiality, and could prevent accurate communication. For example, a relative might feel compelled to "protect" the patient from uncomfortable questioning, or to withhold potentially embarrassing or self-incriminating information expressed by the deaf individual.
- The deaf patient may not feel comfortable to express feelings freely with a relative present.
- Using a relative could compromise the patient's right to privacy and confidentiality.
- There is no assurance that a family member has adequate language skills for communicating effectively in the mental health setting.

Why not use a person on staff who knows sign language?

Having staff who know sign language can be beneficial for any facility. However, knowing sign language, even quite well, does not make a person a qualified interpreter. Unless the staff mem-

ber is RID certified, you have little assurance that communication will be effective and accurate. Inaccurate or incomplete communication will diminish the effectiveness of the mental health services and possibly place the life and health of the patient in jeopardy.⁵

For what types of mental health services should I provide interpreting?

The mental health provider should arrange interpreter services for all situations in which effective communication is essential from initial intake through discharge, follow-up and all ancillary services. The guiding principle is to provide deaf individuals equal access to all services and programs that are available to others. This would include:

- taking the medical and psychological history
- explaining evaluations
- diagnoses
- treatment planning and treatment
- providing individual, group, couples or family therapy
- providing discharge instructions and information about follow-up care
- twelve step programs such as AA and NA
- family conferences
- psychological and neuropsychological testing

What about emergencies?

In emergencies, it is important to provide the most effective communication as quickly as possible. To reduce delays in acquiring an interpreter a facility should:

- establish and post clear procedures for contacting interpreters
- post phone numbers of qualified private practice interpreters and interpreter service agencies at switchboards and intake locations
- make sure emergency and crisis staff know the procedure for requesting an interpreter at all hours

What do I need to do in order to work effectively with an interpreter?

As you work with an interpreter, you can facilitate communication in several ways:

- Hold a pre-session to orient the interpreter to the goals of the session and special techniques you may use. Ask the interpreter about issues related to the interpreting process
- Work with the interpreter and the deaf individual to determine the best possible physical placement for all parties in the situation
- Face the deaf individual and address questions and comments to the deaf individual, not to the interpreter. Avoid saying, “Ask him...” or “Tell her...”
- Know that the interpreter can only provide information about the patient’s language, not personal information or opinions about the patient
- Expect that the interpreter may occasionally pause to ask you for an explanation or clarification of terms in order to provide an accurate interpretation
- Recognize that the interpreter will interpret all that is said in the presence of all individuals and will not edit out any thing spoken or signed as an aside or anything that is said to others in the room
- Be aware that the interpreter is responsible only to interpret, and is never responsible to supervise the patient
- Hold a post-session with the interpreter to sort out communication issues and possible therapeutic concerns such as transference/counter-transference that may have surfaced

How can I know patients’ rights will be respected?

An RID interpreter adheres to a Code of Ethics. Confidentiality is a fundamental tenet. Other tenets of the Code of Ethics include rendering the message faithfully, conveying the content and spirit of the speaker using language most readily understood, and not counseling, advising or interjecting personal opinions.

How can I work more effectively in group settings?

Group mental health situations may involve a deaf person with others who are not deaf. Orienting everyone involved to the function of the interpreter can enhance the effectiveness of the sessions. Some things everyone in the group should know are:

- Proper turn taking for speaking in a group is important because of the interpreting process.
- The interpreter is not a family member or friend of the deaf patient.
- The interpreter will keep all group information confidential.
- The interpreter will not participate in the group session or converse during the session.
- Participants may interact with the deaf individual through the interpreter at appropriate times.

How should I respond to interpreters' safety concerns?

The mental health professional can help interpreters by providing information on appropriate actions to take in the event of volatile situations and by respecting reasonable limitations interpreters may place on their involvement. For example, interpreters should not be left alone with patients and should not be expected to assist in physically restraining patients.

Who is responsible for arranging interpreter services?

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the mental health care provider is responsible for providing auxiliary aids and services which includes qualified interpreters. The provider cannot legally charge a patient for the interpreting services either directly or indirectly.⁶

The Association believes that effective communication is essential to quality mental health care. By using qualified RID certified interpreters, mental health care professionals can do their best to provide the same standard of care to individuals who are deaf as to those who are not deaf.

RID has a series of Standard Practice Papers available upon request. Footnotes frequently reference these materials

¹ see *Professional Sign Language Interpreting*

² see *RID Code of Ethics*

³ see *Team Interpreting*

⁴ see *Use of a Certified Deaf Interpreter*

⁵ see *Multiple Roles*

⁶ see 45 Code of Federal Regulations 84.52(d)1,3 and 28 C.F.R. 36.30(c)



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

INTERPRETING IN LEGAL SETTINGS

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

INTERPRETING IN LEGAL SETTINGS

A qualified RID certified interpreter can bridge the communication gap between legal professionals and deaf individuals they encounter. In legal settings, clear and accurate communication among all involved parties is essential. When the legal professional and the consumer of legal services do not share a common language or communication method, a hazardous gap exists. The legal professional can jeopardize an entire legal process or proceeding by using an unqualified interpreter.

Deaf individuals appear in all kinds of legal settings and on both sides of the legal fence. Whether complainants, defendants, victims, or the accused, or simply taking care of personal business that involves legal issues, deaf individuals have the right to full and clear communication. Attorney-client meetings, settlement conferences, real estate closings, administrative hearings, depositions, and the courts are some of the legal settings that may require sign language or oral interpretation by a qualified interpreter.

Who is responsible for providing interpreters?

State and local courts and administrative agencies are subject to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other state and federal statutes. They are required to provide interpreters or other auxiliary aids and services for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. Under Title III of the ADA, law offices are places of public accommodation that must provide interpreters when necessary to render effective communication. Neither courts nor attorneys may pass along the cost of interpreting service to the individual who is deaf, either directly or indirectly. Law offices may be entitled to an income tax credit for interpreter fees expended in compliance with the ADA.

In instances of court ordered activities, such as alcohol and drug assessment, domestic violence group sessions, and traffic school, the responsibility for providing interpreting service is not so clearly placed. The provision of interpreting services may be the responsibility of the ordering court, under Title II. Or, the agency providing the court ordered services may be responsible under their own Title III obligation. For complete information on the ADA, contact the U.S. Department of Justice, ADA Information Hotline at 1-800-514-0301 for voice or 1-800-514-0383 for TDD. ADA Technical Assistance Manuals are also available from the Department of Justice.

In addition to federal laws such as the ADA, some state and local jurisdictions may have statutory requirements relating to the use of interpreters in the legal system. Federal, state, and local statutes requiring use of interpreters may apply to legal situations in which deaf persons are not direct parties, but are related to the situation in some significant way. An example of this would be the deaf parent or guardian of a minor or person who is incompetent and becomes involved in a legal situation. In addition, people who are deaf may serve on juries and attorneys who are deaf may use interpreters in many job-related situations other than the courtroom.

What are the responsibilities of the interpreter?

An interpreter's first responsibility is to weigh the information regarding the circumstances judiciously to determine whether or not she/he is qualified for the particular situation. Some reasons for declining the assignment could be related to the communication mode of the deaf people involved or personal knowledge or bias in the case. Once the interpreter has accepted an assignment, he or she has the responsibility to facilitate communication accurately and impartially between the parties. The interpreter must execute this role with total absence of bias and must maintain strict confidentiality. Whether communications are covered by legal privilege or not, the interpreter is under professional obligation to maintain confidentiality. The professional ethics¹ of the interpreter requires that the interpreter maintain a singular role. If an interpreter in a case is asked to provide expert testimony, such as on language, deafness, or matters related to the case, or to act as advocate or consultant for any involved party, the interpreter must

either decline to do so, or withdraw as an interpreter from the case. As professionals, interpreters are responsible for making arrangements in advance for compensation.²

How many interpreters are needed?

Each situation requiring interpretation should be assessed to determine the number of interpreters needed. Often, because of the length or complexity of an assignment, interpreters will work in teams of two or more.³ Interpreting is more mentally and physically demanding than most people realize, and the first thing to suffer as a result of interpreter fatigue is accuracy. Besides fatigue, there may be legal or logistical reasons to have more than one interpreter. For example, if more than one deaf individual is involved, one team of interpreters may be interpreting for a witness while a second team is at the defense table with a deaf defendant and the defense attorney. In some instances, the communication mode of an individual who is deaf may be so unique that it cannot be accessed by interpreters who are hearing. Such cases may require the use of a Certified Deaf Interpreter who is able to meet the special communication need.⁴

How do you know if an interpreter is qualified?

In the field of interpreting, as in other professions, appropriate credentials are an important indicator of an interpreter's qualifications. The RID awards certification to interpreters who successfully pass national tests. The tests assess not only language knowledge and communication skills, but also knowledge and judgment on issues of ethics, culture, and professionalism. The most common RID certifications are:

- CI-Certificate of Interpretation
- CT-Certificate of Transliteration
- CSC-Comprehensive Skills Certification
- IC-Interpretation Certificate
- TC-Transliteration Certificate
- CDI-Certified Deaf Interpreter
- OIC:C - Oral Interpreting Certification - Comprehensive

An interpreter who obtains a CI, CT, or CSC, and meets other requirements through training and experience, and passes a rigorous testing process, can obtain the SC:L - Specialist Certificate: Legal. The best choice for any legal situation is an interpreter who possesses an SC:L. Unfortunately, the supply of SC:L interpreters cannot meet the demand. If an interpreter holding the SC:L is not available, an interpreter with previously mentioned generalist certifications and training in legal interpreting should be able to provide satisfactory service.

How do you find a qualified interpreter?

You can engage a private practice interpreter directly or through an interpreter service agency that will find an interpreter to meet your needs. If you are unable to find qualified interpreters in your area, contact the national RID, who can refer you to a contact person or agency in your area. In some instances, a person who is deaf can provide names of interpreters or agencies.

What can you do in order to work effectively with an interpreter?

As you work with an interpreter, you can facilitate communication in several ways:

- Allow the interpreter to become familiar with the matter at hand through discussion of the case and provision of materials. This preparation enables the interpreter to render a more accurate interpretation.
- Realize that there are legal requirements and codes of conduct affecting interpreters in your jurisdiction.
- Recognize that the interpreter will interpret all that is said in the presence of all individuals and will not edit out anything spoken or signed as an aside or anything that is said to others in the room.
- Realize that the interpreter is bound by a professional code of ethics not to provide any information or opinions about the individual who is deaf or about the situation, except in regard to communication issues.
- Expect that the interpreter may occasionally pause to ask you for an explanation or clarification of terms in order to provide an accurate interpretation.
- Work with the interpreter to determine the best possible physical placement for all parties in the situation.

- Speak directly to the individual who is deaf rather than saying to the interpreter, “Ask him...” or “Tell her...”

The Association believes that the only way that the legal rights of deaf people can be assured and the integrity of the legal process be safeguarded is by having qualified RID certified interpreters who have received rigorous training in legal interpreting interpret in legal settings.

RID has a series of Standard Practice Papers available upon request. Footnotes frequently reference these materials.

¹see *RID Code of Ethics*

²see *Business Practices: Billing Considerations*

³see *Team Interpreting*

⁴see *Use of a Certified Deaf Interpreter*



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

INTERPRETING IN RELIGIOUS SETTINGS

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

INTERPRETING IN RELIGIOUS SETTINGS

Religious interpreting occurs in settings which are spiritual in nature. These settings can include worship services, religious education, workshops, conferences, retreats, confession, scripture study, youth activities, counseling, tours and pilgrimages, weddings, funerals, or other special ceremonies.

What Are The Skills Needed of an Interpreter?

Although in most religious settings English is the primary language, some situations require the interpreter to have fluency in another spoken language or access to an English translation. Some settings incorporate ceremonial languages such as Hebrew, Greek, or Arabic as a regular component of worship, while in other language groups (e.g. Spanish, Korean, or Native American) the entire spiritual observance may be conducted in that language. The interpreter also needs to know which language or communication mode is used by people who are deaf in each setting in order to interpret the spoken message accurately. For a presenter who is deaf, the interpreter must be able to interpret, using the voice clearly for the rest of the audience or participants to understand.

You will be most assured of quality by using an RID certified interpreter. Interpreters certified by RID have received training and have demonstrated skills related to language and communication, as well as knowledge, and practice of ethics¹ and professionalism.²

Many interpreters begin their careers by providing services in a religious setting. Non-certified interpreters working in such religious settings still require guidance from a highly qualified interpreter. Frequently, a skilled, certified interpreter has the opportunity to formally mentor a non-certified interpreter, giving feedback about interpreting skills and professionalism, enabling that person to reach the point of functioning independently and becoming certified.³

What Is The Knowledge Required of an Interpreter?

In addition to the skills and ethical principles expected of qualified interpreters in all settings, interpreters in religious settings should have a heightened awareness of cultural expectations and be familiar with:

- specialized religious names and vocabulary, both signed and spoken
- primary texts and materials specific to the setting
- doctrine(s), creed(s), and ceremonial prayers
- customs, teachings and traditions.

Interpreting for counseling situations offered in a spiritual context requires that the interpreter have specialized training about the general nature of counseling and how to best function in this setting.⁴ Sometimes, controversial issues are discussed during such assignments. Therefore, interpreters should be prepared for potential conflicts between their own views and those expressed in counseling sessions.

Whether an interpreter needs to be a practicing member of a certain faith or a follower of its precepts is a decision made by those requesting interpreting services. In some situations only a member of the group would be able to grasp nuances and interpret faithfully. In addition, having an interpreter who is a member provides a level of comfort and confidence because of shared values, beliefs, language, and experience. These issues always need to be addressed with the interpreter prior to delivery of interpreting services.

What Other Factors Are Important?

A prepared interpreter functions more effectively than one who is not. The interpreter needs

access to materials prior to interpreting, particularly music, scriptures or readings. In music, lyrics are often difficult to hear; sometimes multiple parts are sung simultaneously; and the meaning behind poetic language can be obscure. Just as an accompanist or singer must rehearse, an interpreter must plan how to render a piece of music clearly and artistically. For a musical or dramatic program, interpreters may need weeks to prepare and be included in rehearsals. For regular worship music, less time is usually sufficient, especially if interpreters are already familiar with the material. If materials are not available in printed or recorded format ahead of time, prior communication with the person in charge of the presentations will assist in the interpretation process. Because interpreting is a physically and mentally challenging task, a long or complex event may require a team of two or more interpreters.⁵

Where the interpreter is to be located depends on a variety of factors. Details should be arranged and agreed upon before services are provided and should include:

- visibility of the person signing, whether interpreter or person who is deaf
- proper lighting
- a visual background that is not distracting
- the ability of interpreters to view participants and their comments
- logistics that allow for easy, inconspicuous switching of team interpreters
- elimination of traffic between interpreters and participants
- availability of equipment such as a microphone, monitor, or other assistive devices.

Is There Compensation Involved?

The provision of payment to interpreters depends on the dynamics of each situation. Like other professionals, interpreters earn their living from compensation received for their services. However, if a professional interpreter views interpreting in a religious setting as a service to the organization or a charitable contribution, payment might not be expected by the interpreter. Interpreters contracting for special events or as substitutes must also address this before accepting assignments. Compensation issues always need to be addressed prior to provision of interpreting services.⁶

The Association believes that interpreting is a way to make settings which are spiritual in nature more accessible to individuals who are deaf. Individuals can often participate more fully in religious/spiritual settings when qualified RID certified interpreters are providing interpretation.

RID has a series of Standard Practice Papers available upon request. Footnotes frequently reference these materials

¹ see *Code of Ethics*

² see *Professional Sign Language Interpreting*

³ see *Mentoring*

⁴ see *Interpreting in a Mental Health Setting*

⁵ see *Team Interpreting and Use of a Certified Deaf Interpreter*

⁶ see *Business Practices: Billing Considerations*



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

ORAL TRANSLITERATION

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

ORAL TRANSLITERATION

Oral transliterators (also called oral interpreters) facilitate spoken communication between individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and use speech and speechreading as their primary mode of communication, and other persons. These speechreaders may or may not also know or use manual communication or sign language. Oral transliteration, however, does not normally include any use of sign language. Oral transliterators may also “voice” for speakers who use no voice, or whose voices are difficult for listeners to understand. Oral transliteration should be provided by a transliterator who is a qualified, trained professional. (Note: the terms “transliterator” and “interpreter” are used interchangeably in this paper.)

When is an Oral Transliterator needed?

In certain communication settings, speechreading (also referred to as lipreading) skills cannot be used effectively by individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Some such settings include:

- classrooms
- groups
- conferences
- communication with a speaker who is not present (telephone, radio, public address system, etc.)
- communication with a speaker who is present but whose speech is difficult to speechread.

In group meetings, the speechreader cannot know who will speak next, and so misses some of what has been said while trying to find the speaker. In classrooms and conferences, the speechreader may be unable to see the speaker’s face well enough or at close enough range to speechread effectively, or the speaker may be in the audience behind the speechreader. A speaker who has a great deal of facial hair, or unclear speech, or an accent, may be difficult to speechread even if clearly seen. In all such cases the oral transliterator, who repeats silently what the speakers say, can provide an easily-speechread, clear and consistently-visible source of the spoken message for the speechreader.

People unfamiliar with the speech of deaf and hard of hearing individuals may find it difficult to understand. When this is the case, the person may choose to have an oral interpreter repeat the message for the benefit of listeners. This is called voice interpreting. The deaf individual, interpreter and other parties involved should discuss the need for voice interpreting ahead of time. To do this effectively, the oral interpreter needs strong speechreading skills. Some reasons a deaf or hard of hearing person may use voice interpreting are:

- personal preference of the speaker not to use his or her own voice
- the poor quality of a public address system
- acoustic factors in the setting, including distance from audience and size of the room
- an audience which lacks experience with speakers who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Finally, a person without the ability to vocalize due to laryngectomy or tracheotomy for example, may need the services of an oral transliterator (who may be deaf, hard of hearing, or hearing) with excellent speechreading skills to voice his or her silent speech.

What is involved in oral transliterating?

Oral transliterating is more than simply mouthing exactly what a speaker has said. The interpreter employs a variety of skills and techniques in order to convey both the message content and emotions of what has been said.

Deaf and hard of hearing individuals who use speech and speechreading may have diverse pref-

ferences regarding support techniques an oral interpreter may use. However, always required from the oral interpreter/transliterators are:

- accurate reception and production of the spoken message
- clear articulation and phrasing
- appropriate facial expression
- appropriate natural gestures.

Additional skills and techniques that may be required include:

- appropriate rephrasing or word changes to enhance clarity while maintaining the original message
- additional mime-like gestures to clarify difficult-to-speechread words
- printing in the air or on paper of easily-misunderstood words, proper nouns, or numbers
- voice interpreting.

Where professional oral transliterators work

The interpreter must be a versatile, flexible, skilled professional. Conferences, conventions, and large meetings are frequent settings. Oral transliterators work in a variety of settings and situations. Many work in private practice; they are self-employed. From scheduling assignments to handling billing, the oral transliterator is responsible for all business aspects.¹ The private practice transliterator may also receive assignments through interpreter service agencies. Others are salaried staff of an agency, institution, or corporation.² Still others interpret in educational settings.

Oral Transliterator Ethics

RID certified oral transliterators adhere to the RID Code of Ethics. The Code, shown on the final page of this brochure, holds transliterators to a high level of professionalism in matters of transliteration and business practices.

Under what circumstances can the Oral Transliterator work most effectively?

The best service is provided when the oral transliterator:

- has been briefed in advance on technical terms, acronyms, jargon and proper nouns to be used in the assignment and knows if they are likely to be familiar to the speechreader
- has met with the speechreader in advance to determine the best placement of the transliterator in relation to light distance, background, and angle
- has determined if voicing will be necessary, and if so has had an opportunity to become familiar with the speechreader's speech
- teams with another qualified oral transliterator on longer assignments.³

What constitutes a qualified Oral Transliterator?

A qualified oral transliterator has knowledge of the process of speechreading and speech production, and of the communication needs of speechreaders. The transliterator is aware of the factors influencing both transliterator and speechreader in the oral interpreting process, and how to adapt them as necessary to make this process successful. The qualified oral transliterator has developed the articulation skills necessary to be easily understood by speechreaders, and has become skilled in using verbal and non-verbal support techniques to assure the message is transmitted accurately even when the original version is intrinsically difficult to speechread. The qualified oral transliterator has developed the stamina to maintain the mental concentration needed for continuous, accurate reception and expression of the spoken message for an extended period of time.

While most knowledge and skills needed for oral transliterating are quite different from those needed for sign-language interpreting, some are the same, including:

- knowledge of and adherence to the Code of Ethics
- professional standards of service and behavior

- awareness of the communication needs of deaf and hard of hearing consumers.

The Association provides evaluation and certification of oral transliterators comparable to that for sign language interpreters.⁴ Verification of oral certification can be requested from the oral transliterator. It is important that oral transliterators be trained and experienced in the role of an oral transliterator and be qualified and able to do the job. Acquiring and maintaining certification reflects such qualification.

Who is responsible for providing interpreting/transliterating services?

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), qualified interpreters are listed as “auxiliary services” for ensuring that communication for people who are deaf or hard of hearing is as effective as communication with people who are not. An individual who depends on speechreading for communication may request a qualified oral transliterator in order to have an equal opportunity to participate in and enjoy the benefits of services, programs or activities. The responsible parties may be entities such as employers, schools, hospitals, conference sponsors, government offices, or private persons.

How do I find a qualified oral transliterator?

You can engage a private practice transliterator directly or through an interpreter service agency. You will have most assurance of quality by hiring an RID certified oral transliterator. Transliterators certified by RID have demonstrated skills related to language and communication, as well as knowledge and practice of ethics and professionalism. To verify current certification status, contact the Association’s national office.

To be effective, the transliterator’s communication must be compatible with that of the deaf or hard of hearing individual; therefore, it is important that the individual be consulted on the choice of transliterator. For this reason an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing may decline to use a specific transliterator. Ethnic, cultural, and linguistic concerns of the consumers should be considered in the selection.

The Association believes that provision of a qualified, RID certified oral transliterator will help provide an equal opportunity for a speechreader to participate in and enjoy the benefits of a service, program or activity.

RID has a series of Standard Practice Papers available upon request. Footnotes frequently reference these materials

¹ see *Business Practices: Billing Considerations*

² see *Multiple Roles*

³ see *Team Interpreting*

⁴ see *RID information on Certification*



STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

INTERPRETING FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf
333 Commerce Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/838-0030 (V)
703/838-0459 (TTY)
703/838-0454 (Fax)
www.rid.org

INTERPRETING FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND

The deaf-blind population consists of individuals who have differing degrees of vision and hearing loss. Some factors contributing to the great diversity among deaf-blind people in terms of language use and communication preferences are:

- age of onset and cause of the vision loss and hearing loss
- degree of usable vision and/or hearing, and whether current vision and hearing is stable, progressive, or fluctuating
- level of language competencies in sign language and/or English
- educational background
- socio-economic background
- family and ethnic background
- physical or cognitive abilities

There is a continuum of vision and hearing loss among people who are deaf-blind. Some deaf-blind people have a substantial amount of vision while others have little or no usable vision. The same is true for hearing; some deaf-blind people are hard of hearing while others are moderately or profoundly deaf. The diversity in levels of vision and hearing contribute to the variety of communication modes used by people who are deaf-blind. Examples of these include:

- sign language at close visual range or in a limited visual space
- sign language received by sense of touch with one or two hands (tactile)
- speechreading at close range
- fingerspelling received by sense of touch with one hand or two
- print-on-palm (block letters drawn on the palm)
- Braille
- hearing with assistive listening devices
- reading with assistive devices for communication (e.g., refreshable braille, real time captioning, large visual display).

Vision and hearing are primary channels for interacting with others, understanding the environment and benefiting from educational and professional opportunities. For deaf-blind people to be active and informed participants in society they often need qualified interpreters. From an accessibility viewpoint, providing qualified interpreters is one way agencies, facilities, and programs can make themselves available to deaf-blind people.

How can I arrange for interpreting services?

The person arranging interpreting services for deaf-blind consumers should:

- ask for consumer preferences regarding communication mode and specific interpreter(s)
- engage interpreters skilled in working with deaf-blind consumers (Not all sign language interpreters are qualified to work with deaf-blind consumers.)
- engage an appropriate number of interpreters
- arrive at a clear understanding of the interpreters' roles and responsibilities for the assignment
- not assume that interpreters will also be responsible for providing or setting up special communication equipment (e.g. amplifiers, FM systems, brailers)
- provide scripts, outlines, texts, or other relevant materials in advance
- be aware that deaf-blind participants and interpreters may need frequent breaks
- ensure that the visual environment is conducive to communication for the deaf-blind participant.

What Is Included in The Interpreting Process?

Just as communication modes may vary, the interpreting process varies greatly depending on the needs of the deaf-blind individuals involved and on the situation in which the interpreting takes place. Because of the unique nature of deaf-blind communication, interpreters must be versatile and flexible. For the same reason, the ratio of interpreters to consumers may be high

so that the unique communication needs of each deaf-blind consumer can be met satisfactorily. In situations involving one deaf-blind individual, only one interpreter or interpreter team would be needed. When two or more deaf-blind individuals are present, more teams may be required. For example, one team might interpret via touch with a single consumer, while another team would interpret at close visual range with a group of two to four consumers, and yet another team would produce a Braille transcript or provide audible interpretation using an FM system.

Another reason two or more interpreters may be needed is that interpreting with deaf-blind persons is strenuous both physically and mentally, and interpreters may need frequent rest breaks or relief.

Sometimes a team includes an interpreter who is deaf. In these instances, that interpreter receives the speaker's message visually, processes the message, then transmits it in the mode most easily understood by that particular deaf-blind consumer.

Interpreters working with deaf-blind people will be sensitive to environmental factors such as visual background, lighting, seating positions, and auditory factors which may affect the interpreting process. When possible, interpreters will address these issues in advance of the interpreting event. When that is not possible, the interpreters will make necessary adjustments in order to achieve the best possible results.

When interpreting with a deaf-blind individual, transmitting what is being said by others is only part of the task. Other information interpreters may express to deaf-blind persons could include:

- the layout of the room
- who is present and what they are doing
- who is speaking
- the speaker's emotion
- unspoken actions and reactions of people in the room
- extraneous noises
- other visual and auditory information
- culturally relevant information

What Are Support Service Providers?

Many deaf-blind people may require services not typically associated with interpreting. For example, a deaf-blind person may request the assistance of a guide. An individual trained to provide such services is often referred to as a Support Service Provider (SSP). While SSP duties may be performed by interpreters, their primary duty is to interpret. Therefore any additional responsibilities should be agreed upon in advance by all parties.

The Association believes that using certified interpreters who are skilled and qualified allows people who are deaf-blind to participate on a basis equal to their peers who are not deaf-blind. Providing qualified interpreters is one way agencies, facilities, and programs can make themselves accessible to deaf-blind people.

RID has a series of Standard Practice Papers available upon request. Footnotes frequently reference these materials