



What is a Sign Language Interpreter?

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A sign language interpreter is someone who can interpret in sign language effectively, accurately and impartially, both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary. To work as an interpreter in North Carolina, a person must be licensed. In applying for a license, the applicant must meet qualification standards required by the North Carolina Interpreter and Transliterators Licensure Law (N.C.G.S 90D). The Act lists situations where licensure does not apply.

A licensed sign language interpreter demonstrates proficient and ethical interpreting skills and has the knowledge and expertise required to function in a professional capacity. Interpreters work to ensure effective communication between individuals with who use sign language and those who don't. They work in a variety of settings such as, but not limited to legal, medical, mental health, rehabilitation, education, social services, businesses, industries, government and performing arts. Interpreters may be self-employed (freelance) or work through an Interpreter Services Agency.

Interpreting requires intensive training and experience before proficient levels of skill are attained. If you are interested in becoming a sign language interpreter, learn about Interpreter Training Programs or Sign Language Studies in North Carolina by contacting DSDHH. Recommended course work may include, but not limited to, courses in Deaf culture, Deaf literature and folklore, elementary to advanced American Sign Language instruction, internship requirements and involvement with the local and state consumer organizations. To enhance knowledge and remain current with the profession, join a local, state and/or national interpreter organization.

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Department of Health and Human Services • Aldona Z. Wos, M.D., Secretary
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What is a Sign Language Interpreter?, cont.

How is a Sign Language Interpreter Different from a Signer?

Sign language interpreters and signers function in different settings, using language at a different pace with different content. Signers usually are present in natural, conversational settings, covering day-to-day topics such as chatting with friends who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Signers have control of their own intent, content, pace and message. Interpreters, on the other hand, work in situations where they can't control the content of the message, but are trained to accurately convey another person's message. The interpreter operates in an environment where terminology is much more advanced and unpredictable. The interpreter must keep up with the speaker, without knowing in advance what will be said. They must render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and the spirit of the speaker, using the language most readily understood by the person(s) they serve.

Often, people who have learned some sign language are incorrectly used as interpreters. A person who knows only conversational sign language does not possess the expertise required to perform effectively in the role of an interpreter.

Reference: Standard Practice Paper; www.rid.org

Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing (DSDHH)

**2301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2301
www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh**

How to contact us:

We have seven Regional Centers throughout the state to assist you with your needs. Please contact the center nearest you for assistance.

DSDHH's phone listing uses the following abbreviations:

V – voice (for people who do not use telephone assistive equipment)

TTY – phone equipment

(for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf Blind people)

VP – video phone

(for people who use sign language to communicate)

Asheville:

12 Barbetta Drive • Asheville, NC 28806
828-665-8733 V • 828-333-5830 VP
828-665-8737 TTY • 800-681-8035 TTY
800-681-7998 V • 828-670-5054 Fax

Charlotte:

5501 Executive Center Dr., Suite 200 • Charlotte, NC 28212
704-568-8558 V • 704-918-1554 VP
704-568-8505 TTY • 800-835-5302 V
800-835-5306 TTY • 704-568-9615 Fax

Greensboro:

122 North Elm Street, Suite 900 • Greensboro, NC 27401
336-273-9692 V/TTY • 336-429-5644 VP
888-467-3413 V/TTY • 336-256-0689 Fax

Morganton:

107 Foothills Drive • Morganton, NC 28655
828-430-7185 V • 828-475-6606 VP
828-430-7192 TTY • 800-999-8915 V
800-205-9920 TTY • 828-430-7193 Fax

Raleigh:

2301 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, NC 27699-2301
919-874-2250 V/TTY • 919-890-0858 VP
800-999-5737 V/TTY • 919-855-6872 Fax

Wilmington:

3340 Jaeckle Drive, The Randall Bldg., Suite 104
Wilmington, NC 28403
910-251-5702 V • 910-777-5770 VP
910-251-5767 TTY • 800-205-9915 V
800-205-9916 TTY • 910-251-2677 Fax

Wilson:

2705 Wooten Blvd. • Wilson, NC 27893
252-243-3104 V • 252-674-1141 VP
252-243-1951 TTY • 800-999-6828 V
800-205-9925 TTY • 252-243-7634 Fax

Home Office:

919-874-2212 V/TTY • 919-890-0859 VP
800-851-6099 V/TTY • 919-855-6872 Fax

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