



What is a Qualified Sign Language Interpreter?

A sign language interpreter is an individual who interprets effectively, accurately and impartially, between English and American Sign Language. Interpreters provide communication access for all parties.

Often, people who have learned some sign language are incorrectly used as interpreters. Interpreting requires extensive training and experience before proficient levels of skill are attained.

Interpreters adhere to a Code of Professional Conduct. To interpret effectively, interpreters will

- possess the knowledge required for the specific assignment including specialized vocabulary.
- remain impartial throughout all interactions.
- keep all interpreted information confidential.
- engage in professional growth and development.

Any person who provides interpreting services for a fee or other consideration must possess a North Carolina interpreting license. Religious proceedings and educational interpreters are exempt from this requirement.

Interpreters must have their licensure card or a business card with their license number with them and available upon request. For a list of the current licensees or for more information including questions regarding violations, please visit the North Carolina Interpreting and Transliterating Licensure Board at www.ncitlb.org.



Hiring a Sign Language Interpreter

Most organizations, businesses, and service providers are required by law to secure and pay for interpreting services, when necessary, to ensure effective communication. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is one of many federal laws designed to protect individuals with disabilities, including individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind. The ADA recognizes sign language interpretation as a reasonable accommodation.

When hiring interpreters, any charges or fees associated with the provision of interpreting services cannot be passed on to the individual who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

You can hire interpreters who work independently or contact an interpreting service agency to schedule and coordinate services.

Given the length, complexity and/or the needs of the individuals involved, more than one interpreter may be required. The individual interpreter or the interpreting service agency can guide you in determining the number of interpreters needed to adequately provide effective communication.

Sometimes to provide effective communication when there are special language challenges, the use of an interpreter who is Deaf is recommended. These Deaf interpreters are particularly skilled at interpreting for a variety of Deaf consumers, including consumers who are DeafBlind or who use non-standard American Sign Language. They often work in tandem with an interpreter who can hear, but can also work alone depending on the situation.

Contacting a Sign Language Interpreter

To protect the confidentiality of the individuals involved, share only limited information when initially requesting an interpreter, such as:

- Date
- Start and end time
- General location

In addition, more detailed information may be shared once the interpreter's availability is confirmed:

- Name of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind person
- Fees and policies, including cancellations and no shows
- Billing and invoicing information
- Name of the contact person and contact information
- Agenda, handouts, PowerPoints, specialized vocabulary, or other pertinent information

Confirming these details with the interpreter(s) in writing is best practice.





Tips for Working with a Sign Language Interpreter

Working with sign language interpreters may be a new experience for you.

The following list has been compiled to familiarize you with the process of working with interpreters.

Placement

- Be prepared to work with the interpreter when determining the appropriate placement.
- It is preferable for the interpreter to be placed near the speaker.
- Interpreters should be in the Deaf individual's line of sight.

Lighting

- Light needs to fall on the face of the interpreter for maximum visibility.
- Additional lighting may be needed to ensure the interpreter is clearly seen from the front.
- Interpreters must remain visible if lights are turned off or dimmed for PowerPoints or other audio-visuals.
- Avoid placing the interpreter in front of windows or other sources of strong light that will cast a shadow on the interpreter's face.

Background

- Backgrounds that are too busy are stressful for those dependent on visual messages.
- Solid backgrounds without bright lights or windows are most helpful.

Communication

- Make eye contact with the Deaf individual and speak directly to them, not the interpreter.
- Speak naturally and at your normal pace.
- Do not ask the interpreter to censor any portion of the conversation.
- The interpreter will interpret anything and everything they hear.
- Participants should speak one at a time to ensure that all messages can be interpreted.
- Do not assume that the interpreter has prior knowledge of the Deaf person or will be interpreting future appointments.
- When referencing visual information, such as a form that needs to be signed, pause to allow the Deaf person to look at the information. You may resume speaking when the Deaf person looks back at the interpreter.





Resources for Finding a Sign Language Interpreter

- Ask the person requesting the accommodation for their preferred interpreters or interpreter service agencies.
- Contact your local Interpreting Services Specialists at the Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for further guidance.

Helpful websites:

1. The North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing maintains a directory of NC licensed interpreters and interpreting agencies. www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh/directories.htm
2. The National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf maintains a searchable database of sign language interpreters and interpreting agencies nationwide. <https://myaccount.rid.org/Public/Search/Member.aspx>



Scan with your phone's camera to access the link.

What's the purpose of requiring a license?

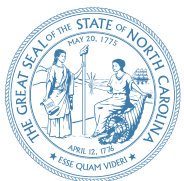
The NC Interpreter and Transliterator Law, NC General Statute 90D was created to ensure standards of competency and to promote quality interpreting and transliterating services for the citizens of North Carolina.

Interpreting Services Specialists

For assistance in finding/hiring/working with a qualified interpreter, contact the Interpreting Services Specialist at your local Regional Center for the NC Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. We have seven Regional Centers throughout the state to assist you with your needs. Please contact the center nearest you. Scan the QR code to the right to locate the contact information for the DSDHH Regional Centers. Choose the Regional Center that serves your county and ask for the Interpreting Services Specialist.



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