SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING SERVICES

Consumer Guide

Abstract

NIH provides centrally funded sign language interpreting services to the NIH community under a performance based contract to facilitate communication between spoken and sign languages that enable members of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH) community to participate in events and activities and enjoy equal access to all the benefits and privileges offered at NIH.
Contents

Contents ........................................................................................................................................................................................ 1
Introduction ................................................................................................................................................................................ 2
NIH Interpreting Services Policy ......................................................................................................................................... 3
How to Request Services ......................................................................................................................................................... 3
Steps for making a secure online request for interpreting services: ...................................................................................... 3
Important reminders:................................................................................................................................................................................ 3
Making urgent/after hour requests .................................................................................................................................................... 4
About Sign Language Interpreters ...................................................................................................................................... 4
  1. Trained Professionals: .................................................................................................................................................................... 4
  2. Specialists:........................................................................................................................................................................................... 4
  3. Multilingual Skills: ........................................................................................................................................................................... 4
  4. Code of Ethics: ................................................................................................................................................................................... 4
Tips for Supervisors, Patient Caregivers and Event Organizers ...................................................................................... 5
  ➢ Public Events: ..................................................................................................................................................................................... 5
  ➢ It’s Personal: ....................................................................................................................................................................................... 5
  ➢ Let Them Decide: .............................................................................................................................................................................. 5
  ➢ Sharing Arrangements: ................................................................................................................................................................. 5
Tips for Speakers and Meeting Chairs ............................................................................................................................... 5
  ➢ Provide Copies In Advance: .......................................................................................................................................................... 5
  ➢ Multimedia Needs: ........................................................................................................................................................................... 6
  ➢ Seating and Lighting: ..................................................................................................................................................................... 6
  ➢ Interpreter’s Role: ............................................................................................................................................................................ 6
  ➢ Speaking Tips: ................................................................................................................................................................................... 6
  ➢ Small Group Meetings: ................................................................................................................................................................. 6
Appendix 1: Glossary of Sign Language Interpreting Terminology .............................................................................. 7
Introduction

As the nation's largest employer, the Federal government is committed to increasing and improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities and removing barriers that impede communication or deny equal access. Title 5 USC, Section 3102 authorizes Federal agencies to employ or assign others to provide communication services for employees who qualify under the law for reasonable accommodations.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the Department of Health and Human Services is proud of its growing, diverse workforce and provides centrally funded sign language interpreting services to its employees, patients, and visitors who are Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing (D/HH) under a performance-based contract.

The Office of Research Services (ORS), Division of Amenities and Transportation Services (DATS) manages this service contract and has developed this consumer guide as a helpful tool and resource. Please contact the Interpreting Services team with questions or comments at interpretingservice@mail.nih.gov or visit us online at http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dats/interpret/Pages/index.aspx.

We hope you find this consumer guide useful and we look forward to working with you.

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NIH Interpreting Services Policy

- In accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, and the NIH Manual Issuance 2204, NIH is responsible for providing sign language interpreting services as a reasonable accommodation to employees, applicants, visitors, and patients, unless doing so would cause undue hardship on the agency (Ref. Manual Section J).
- Requests for full-time continuous interpreting services for individual employees will be considered on a case-by-case basis (Ref. Manual Section G).
- NIH provides interpreting services through a central funding mechanism to ensure that all applicants and employees with disabilities have equal access when competing for a job or performing the essential functions of their job. Centrally funded means that each Institute/Center (IC) helps pay for these services based on the number of employees working for the IC. Consumers of these services pay nothing provided the services are used as intended.
- Interpreting services are provided under a performance based contract. Services include: American Sign Language, Oral, Tactile, Cued Speech, Pidgin Signed English (PSE), and Signed English; CART services and Video Remote Interpreting (VRI).

How to Request Services

Steps for making a secure online request for interpreting services:

1. All requests, edits, and cancellations for existing requests are done online through a secure portal - https://portal.ainterpreting.com/ - accessible from the NIH Interpreting Services website - http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dats/interpret/Pages/index.aspx
2. First-time users create a user-profile by logging into the portal on your NIH desktop computer or through VPN and follow the prompts.
3. Note any preferences for interpreters or to participate in a shared/cluster arrangement
4. For technical support issues and questions email support@ainterpreting.com.
5. For VRI (AVIA) technical support and questions email nih@interpreting.com

Important reminders:

- Enter requests as early as possible to ensure delivery of desired services. NOTE: Requests made less than five (5) days before the scheduled event may not be filled as requested or may require your event to be rescheduled.
- Recurring requests are made online the same way as one-time requests; remember to leave instructions in the notes section to indicate the frequency, time, and location.
Provide your interpreter with copies of the meeting agenda, handouts, slides or other meeting related materials, whenever possible.

The system will send a confirmation email after your request has been submitted. It will include the name of your interpreter and a unique identification number (TERP). NOTE: In some cases, interpreters may change due to last minute rescheduling.

Use your TERP number to modify or cancel your existing request within two (2) business day of the scheduled event. NOTE: Any scheduled interpreting services that are no longer required should be cancelled as soon as possible in order to free up resources. Cancellations made less than 48 hours from the event will be billed in full to NIH.

Since interpreting services are centrally funded and to ensure quality control, all interpreting services must be arranged through interpreting services contract with Access Interpreting.

Making urgent/after hour requests

- Normal business hours are 6:30 AM – 6:30 PM, Monday – Friday except Federal holidays.
- On-call interpreters will be dispatched in emergency situations to provide services outside of normal business hours.
- Emergency situations are defined as urgent/critical issues between supervisors and employees, doctors and patients, involving Occupational Medical Services (OMS), Employee Assistance Program (EAP), police/fire/rescue, etc.
- Call 1-571-730-4330 (after hours only) to reach AI’s Emergency Coordinator, who will take all the necessary information and dispatch a certified interpreter within 40 minutes.

About Sign Language Interpreters

1. Trained Professionals: Interpreters under the NIH Interpreting Services contract are experienced, trained practitioners certified by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and registered with the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) to facilitate communication between spoken and sign languages.

2. Specialists: Some interpreters have received advanced technical training and specialize in one or more fields. Holders with a specialist certification have demonstrated specialized knowledge and greater familiarity with language used in fields such as legal and medical.

3. Multilingual Skills: Some interpreters are skilled in variety of communication modes used to interpret for persons with both vision and hearing loss.

4. Code of Ethics: RID, along with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), co-authored the ethical code of conduct for interpreters. Both organizations uphold high
standards of professionalism and ethical conduct for interpreters. At the core of this code of conduct are the seven tenets:

1. Interpreters adhere to standards of confidential communication.
2. Interpreters possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the specific interpreting situation.
3. Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation.
4. Interpreters demonstrate respect for consumers.
5. Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns, and students of the profession.
6. Interpreters maintain ethical business practices.
7. Interpreters engage in professional development.

Tips for Supervisors, Patient Caregivers and Event Organizers

- **Public Events:** A sign language interpreter should be available at all public events whether or not D/HH persons are known to be attending but will not interpret if no one requires their services; after which they may be reassigned to another location.

- **It’s Personal:** Communication flows easiest when there is a level of rapport and trust between the interpreter and the consumer. The D/HH consumer should also be asked which method of interpreting they prefer, i.e. American Sign Language, Oral, Computer Assisted Real-Time Transcription, etc.,) before entering a request for services.

- **Let Them Decide:** There is more than one way to accommodate someone with hearing impairment other than providing an interpreter. Program managers arranging meetings where Deaf/HH persons may be in attendance are responsible for asking each individual his/her preference and allow sufficient time for scheduling/planning.

- **Sharing Arrangements:** If two or more D/HH persons work in close proximity, discuss with them the feasibility of sharing one or more interpreters throughout the day. Note: For this kind of arrangement to be successful it requires full cooperation from each person, coordination of tasks, and flexibility from all involved.

Tips for Speakers and Meeting Chairs

- **Provide Copies In Advance:** When possible, provide the interpreter with a copy of meeting agenda, slides, and handouts prior to the event. Update the interpreter on any changes as soon as possible. In addition, provide lists of names, acronyms,
technical terminology, etc.

- **Multimedia Needs**: Inform DATS in advance of any visual aids, demonstrations, etc. that will occur during the assignment. If multi-media will be used confirm that a closed captioned version is available. If not, provide a copy of the script or slides for preview. (NIH policy requires that all video media used be 508 compliant and closed captioned.)

- **Seating and Lighting**: Consider where the D/HH persons may be seated in the room. Check the lighting to ensure that the interpreter is not in a shadow and can be easily seen by the D/HH participants. Arrange for an additional light source if the room will be darkened for any reason. While no one can dictate where they sit, seating should be provided to the interpreter.

- **Interpreter’s Role**: Remember the interpreter’s role is to facilitate communication, not to participate in the meeting. The person(s) who are not D/HH should speak directly to and look directly at the D/HH person, not the interpreter. Avoid conversing with the interpreter while he/she is working. Keep in mind that interpreters interpret everything that is heard and seen within the assignment. Therefore, if you don’t want something interpreted don’t say or sign it.

- **Speaking Tips**: Speak in a conversational tone and pace using everyday speech patterns. Avoid over enunciating or over simplifying words. Avoid phrases like "tell her" or "ask him." These are indicative of speaking about not to the D/HH person. Look at and address the D/HH person directly. Pause at the end of a main idea. Allow time for team interpreters to trade places. Pause for questions and check to be sure that the D/HH person understands the message. Allow time for the D/HH person to review handouts or visual aids before explaining them to the group.

- **Small Group Meetings**: In small group meetings, only one person should speak at a time. Interruptions or engaging in side conversations should be avoided as it causes confusion for the interpreter. The meeting chairperson can manage the group by asking everyone to take turns. This will reduce confusion and enable the interpreter to accurately facilitate communication.
Appendix 1: Glossary of Sign Language Interpreting Terminology

**American Sign Language (ASL):** A visual language relying on spatial relationships to identify subjects, objects, and verbs, while using body and facial expressions to identify adjectives, adverbs, and other information, similar to how voice inflection is used in spoken languages. Many people assume that ASL is simply a manual form of English. However, ASL has its own grammatical structure, syntax, idioms, and usage which are quite different and distinct from English. Another misconception of Sign Language is that it is universal. ASL is the predominant language of D/HH people in the United States and Canada, except Quebec. However, signed languages, like spoken languages, are native and unique to any community of people.

**Close-vision Interpreting:** This would require an interpreter (D/HH or hearing) to reduce the size and space of their signs for the DeafBlind person, who still has some vision but within a narrow tunnel-like range peripherally.

**Computer Assisted Real-Time Captioning (CART):** Real time captioning provides a word-for-word transcription of what is being said. May be read on a laptop computer or projected onto a large screen television or, for a large audience, onto a full-size screen. Real-time captioning service is exactly that: a concurrent display put into a textual format of what is being said in the immediate environment.

**Consecutive Interpreting:** The interpreter repeats the message in the other language following the utterance of the original speaker. The interpreter listens to a large chunk of information before beginning the production of the message in the target language.

**Cued Speech:** A visual communication system which, in English, uses eight handshapes in four locations ("cues") in combination with the natural mouth movements of speech to make all the sounds of spoken language look different. Shapes of one hand identify consonant sounds; locations near the mouth identify vowel sounds.

**Deaf Interpreting:** A 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:

**DeafBlind Interpreting:** Interpreting for a person who is D/HH and blind or visually impaired through any number of specific approaches or techniques.

**First Person Interpreting:** The interpreter uses the first person when interpreting. For example, if the speaker says "Do you have these symptoms often?" the interpreter repeats verbatim.

**Interpret Sign to Voice:** Interpreting from a signed language (e.g., ASL) to a spoken language (e.g., English). Colloquially referred to as Voice Interpreting; historically referred to as
Receptive Interpreting.

**Interpret Voice to Sign:** Interpreting from a spoken language (e.g., English) to a signed language (e.g., ASL). Colloquially referred to as Sign Interpreting; historically referred to as Expressive Interpreting.

**Interpretation:** The process of changing messages produced in one language immediately into another language. The languages in question may be spoken or signed, but the defining characteristics are the live and immediate transmission.

**Oral Interpreting:** The ability to transliterate a spoken message from a person who hears to a person who is D/HH and the ability to understand and repeat the message and intent of the speech and mouth movements of the person who is D/HH.

**Pidgin Sign English (PSE):** The term PSE is clearly a misnomer. Pidgins are a class of languages with certain characteristics, among them a limited vocabulary, few inflectional endings, and a relatively small set of sounds. The language erroneously known as PSE has none of these characteristics. Rather, it is a contact language which combines some features of English with some features of (ASL).

**Sight Translation:** Whereby a written document relevant (for example, a doctor/patient interview) to the situation is passed to the interpreter for immediate oral translation. Saying aloud or signing in one language a text which is written in another language.

**Simultaneous Interpreting (often confused with “simultaneous translation”):** Describes the most familiar case in which the interpretation is delivered nearly instantaneously after the original message.

**Tactile Interpreting:** Tactile signing or interpreting is used by D/HH persons who are also blind or vision impaired. The signs are produced in a less than full size/range and the DeafBlind person tracks by placing their hand on the other person's hands and track the movement and shape of the signs.

**Team Interpreting:** More than just relieving each other every 20-30 minutes, the two (or more) interpreters work in parallel or synch. The second interpreter provides monitoring of the interpreter's product, predicts and provides alternate interpretation, recognizes errors omissions, and feeds them to the "hot seat" interpreter as appropriate.

**Third Person Interpreting:** The interpreter uses a different person from the speaker, e.g., speaker says "Do you have these symptoms often?" and the interpreter says in the other language, "The doctor wants to know if you have these symptoms often."

**Translation:** The process of changing a written message from one language to another.

**Whispered Interpretation** (also referred to as “escort interpreting”): The interpreter whispers the message to the person, or small group of people, who do not speak the language the larger group is using.