

ACD Tips for Working With Interpreters

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.

Meet with the interpreter beforehand, if possible, in order to

- Clarify unique vocabulary, technical terms, acronyms
- Provide interpreter with any written materials ahead of time.
- Arrange seating, lighting and other needs

Reserve seats for the deaf or hard of hearing participants

- Provide a clear view of the speaker and interpreter preferably in the front.
- Deaf or hard of hearing participants still have the right to sit elsewhere.
- Be flexible with seating arrangements.

Interpreter should be in the consumer's sight line

- This allows deaf or hard of hearing participants to pick up visual cues and the expressions of the speaker.
- In small group discussions, consider using a circle or semi-circle seating arrangement.

Be aware of lighting

- Provide adequate lighting so the interpreter can be seen.
- If lights will be turned off or dimmed use spotlight or small lamp to direct light toward the interpreter.

Talk directly to the deaf or hard of hearing person

- Maintain eye contact with the deaf or hard of hearing person.
- Avoid directing comments to the interpreter saying: "Tell him..." or "Ask her..."
- Speak directly to the deaf or hard of hearing person.

Speak naturally

- Speak at your normal pace and tone. Interpreters will ask you to slow down or repeat if necessary.
- Interpreters listen for concepts and ideas, not just words, to render an accurate interpretation.

Avoid private conversations - everything will be interpreted

- Whatever the interpreter hears will be interpreted. Interpreters are not editors.
- Ask the deaf or hard of hearing person directly if they are following the conversation.

One person should speak at a time

- An interpreter can only accommodate one speaker at a time.
- If you are facilitating a group discussion, be aware that the interpreter will be several seconds behind. Pause between each speaker to allow the interpreter to complete the interpretation.
- Allow the deaf person an opportunity to be involved in the discussion.

Avoid asking the interpreter for opinions or comments regarding the content of the meeting

- Interpreters follow a code of professional conduct that requires impartiality and confidentiality with all assignment related information.
- Do not assume the interpreter has prior knowledge of the deaf person.

Provide a short break every hour

- Interpreting is mentally and physically taxing.
- Do not expect the interpreter to interpret during these breaks.
- Some assignments will require the use of more than one interpreter.
- Rest allows the interpreter to perform better and avoid injury.