



Serving The Community Since 1972

Deaf-Hearing Communication Centre, Inc.

# FACT SHEET

## WORKING WITH A SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER

**HIRE A QUALIFIED INTERPRETER:** As defined by the American's With Disabilities Act, a qualified interpreter is one "who is able to interpret effectively, accurately and impartially both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary." Persons who have taken sign language courses and who can carry on conversations with a deaf person should not be mistaken for interpreters and should not be utilized as alternatives for interpreters.

**PRE-CONFERENCE WITH THE INTERPRETER:** It will greatly increase the chances of a successful interaction if you and the interpreter take a few moments to discuss the nature and logistics of the assignment beforehand. This is also an appropriate time for you to ask the interpreter any questions you may have regarding interpreting for the interpreting process. If there is to be any printed material involved in the assignment the interpreter will need to have a copy in advance. If you have questions about the Deaf person's needs or preferences please ask the Deaf person, and the interpreter will interpret for you. Most Deaf people are happy to answer any questions when interest is expressed.

**SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE DEAF INDIVIDUAL:** Speak at your normal rate of speed and use a natural tone of voice while looking directly at the Deaf person. This may seem strange because the Deaf person will be looking at the interpreter. It is important to avoid using phrases such as "tell him" or "tell her." Address the Deaf person directly, and the responses will be given in the first person. For example, if the Interpreter says, "I am nervous," it is the Deaf person, not the interpreter, who is nervous.

**THE INTERPRETER IS REQUIRED TO INTERPRET EVERYTHING:** During the assignment do not say things to the interpreter or in the presence of the interpreter that you do not want him/her to interpret. If you wish to ask about the interpreter's education or credentials or speak to the interpreter privately, please do so when you pre-conference with the interpreter.

**THE INTERPRETER CANNOT ADD ANYTHING TO THE CONVERSATION BEING INTERPRETED:** Just as interpreters may not omit anything which is said, they also may not add anything to the conversation. The interpreter is a neutral party who is there to facilitate communication and who always maintains confidentiality.

**MAKE SURE THE LIGHTING AND AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT IS SET UP PROPERLY BEFORE THE ASSIGNMENT:** This includes making sure that the captioning for any video presentation is turned on and that there is proper lighting for the interpreter to be clearly seen by the deaf individuals. Please receive consent from the interpreter before any recording, either video or audio, is made of the assignment. This consent should be asked for at the time the request for interpreting service is made.

**SOME ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRE TWO OR MORE INTERPRETERS:** Interpreting places strenuous demands on the interpreter, both mentally and physically. To ensure accuracy and the occupational safety of interpreters, two interpreters are required for many assignments. Factors involved in this determination include the length of the assignment, the difficulty of the subject matter involved, the type of situation, and the language of the deaf individuals. In some situations one of the interpreters will be a deaf person who also is a qualified interpreter.

**For more information on interpreters or to hire a qualified Sign Language Interpreter, please call the Deaf-Hearing Communication Centre Interpreter Referral Department (IRD) at 610-604-0452.**