

Procedure #6300
Category: Academy Programs
Title: REQUESTING AND USE OF VIDEO REMOTE INTERPRETING
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Reviewers: MSA Superintendent; MSA Directors; MSA Interpreter Coordinator

I. PURPOSE

This procedure is to establish a clear and consistent procedure for requesting and use of Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) at the Minnesota State Academies (MSA).

II. OVERVIEW

VRI is a video telecommunication service that uses devices such as web cameras or videophones to provide sign language/spoken language interpreting services. This differs from Video Relay Services (VRS) as VRS services cannot legally be used to interpret for conversations between individuals in the same room. As a part of our operations, we occasionally have a need for VRI to support communication access as available/appropriate. Furthermore, as our students prepare for their future after graduation, MSA wants to provide training on how to utilize this service as a part of possible accommodations that they might request as part of their education, employment, or needs in life

III. PHILOSOPHY

A. MSA believes that the use of live ASL-English interpreters is typically preferable to VRI. However, MSA recognizes that there are situations in which live interpreters may not be available or preferred. MSA strongly believes that this decision should be made by the consumers rather than having a systematic approach towards use of VRI in certain situations.

B. MSA also believes that there are limitations to the use of VRI and MSA must consider criteria (outlined later in this policy) carefully before determining if VRI is appropriate to the situation. Generally, VRI is most appropriate for one-on-one conversations or small group discussions and is not appropriate for large meetings or trainings. Technology challenges and/or limitations must also be addressed prior to use of VRI.

C. MSA believes that opportunities should be provided for deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deafblind students to experience the use of VRI as a part of their transition plan. Learning about VRI as well as other accommodations to support their

access to information and communication is a critical part of developing their self-advocacy skills.

D. MSA believes that in order to access VRI services successfully, training about VRI services must be provided to staff and students. This should be a part of transition coursework for students and professional development opportunities for staff.

IV. CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING IF VRI IS APPROPRIATE

The following criteria should be utilized when considering the use of VRI services.

1. Availability of a live interpreter
2. Consumer choice
3. Length and content of the assignment
4. Availability and quality of technology in the location (i.e. wireless vs hard-wired access, size of screen, camera/sound quality)
5. Age, language skills, and cognitive abilities of the student
6. Security and confidentiality of the VRI services
7. Qualifications of the VRI interpreter
8. Size of the meeting – number of participants
9. Preparation materials/information for the interpreter
10. Training that has been provided to the consumer about VRI services

V. PROCESS FOR EXTERNAL VRI SERVICES

Requests for external VRI services must be submitted to the MSA Interpreter Coordinator following timelines posted on the request form. Supporting details must be provided to justify the use of VRI for assignments.

The MSA Interpreter Coordinator will schedule VRI services. The requester is responsible for reserving and use of technology necessary in the location for VRI services. If IT services are required, the requester is responsible for requesting assistance through the IT Help Desk.

Directors of each campus will be responsible for establishing activities to introduce deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deafblind students, as appropriate, to the process of using VRI services, starting in middle school, so that students learn how to navigate the request system to get services. The directors will also be responsible for providing professional development activities for staff members.

VI. PROCESS FOR INTERNAL VRI SERVICES

In some situations, it may be cost effective and appropriate for individuals to utilize MSA staff interpreters while in remote locations, using VRI, instead of bringing interpreters along on the trip. In those instances, requests must also be submitted to the MSA Interpreter Coordinator following posted timelines and incorporate specifics of the assignment so that technology requirements can be established on both ends. The requester is responsible for reserving and use of technology at the remote location while the interpreter(s) will utilize established technology and locations on the MSA campuses.

VII. EMERGENCY OR LAST MINUTE REQUESTS

Occasionally, staff members may have emergency needs or last-minute requests that can be covered by VRI services. Directors/Supervisors will have access to on-demand VRI services for those situations and can assist staff members in establishing those services as necessary. The consumer must complete and submit the interpreter request form after those assignments for documentation and/or billing purposes. Consumers must understand that last-minute or “on-demand” services may not utilize preferred or highly qualified interpreters so discretion must be used in determining if VRI is appropriate for the situation.