

Procedure #6303
Category: Academy Programs
Title: CERTIFIED DEAF INTERPRETERS
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Reviewers: MSA Department Supervisors; MSA Interpreter Coordinator

I. PURPOSE

This procedure is to establish a guide to support decisions regarding when a certified deaf interpreter (CDI) is needed for student and/or staff communication access. In scenarios where a CDI is needed, there is usually a total of two interpreters - a hearing ASL/English interpreter and a CDI, facilitating the conversation between the deaf and hearing consumers. The ASL/English interpreter will take the words of the hearing consumer and interpret it into ASL for the CDI, and in turn, the CDI takes the message and interprets it for the Deaf consumer in a way that best meets their access needs.

II. NEED

At times, a CDI may be needed when the communication needs of the deaf consumer(s) are so unique that interpreters who are hearing cannot adequately provide full access to the information being presented. Benefits of using a certified deaf interpreter are:

- Optimal understanding by all parties
- Efficient use of time and resources
- Clarification of linguistic and/or cultural confusion and misunderstanding(s)
- Arrival at a clear conclusion in the interpreting situation
- Application of characteristics reflective of Deaf Culture that isn't familiar to hearing interpreters

III. CRITERIA

The MSA administrators in charge of the situation or the on-call supervisor will determine if a CDI is needed for communication in situations involving our students and/or staff. Factors that the administrators will consider when making this decision are:

- Use of idiosyncratic or non-standard signs/gestures such as those commonly referred as "home signs" which are unique to an individual or family.
- Use of a foreign language (signed or spoken as their 1st language)

- The limitations of the individual's communication skills (i.e. students with cognitive challenges, students who have experienced language deprivation/delays in language development, etc.)
- The supports that deafblind individuals may need (including deaf individuals with limited vision)
- Use of signs particular to a given region, ethnic, or age group
- The circumstances of the situation (i.e. complex topics, varied sign language abilities of the participants, size of the meeting)
- The recommendations of staff working with the individual and/or the request of the individual for a CDI.

IV. PROCESS

- A. The MSA administrator in charge or the on-call supervisor determine if this is a school-related situation and if a CDI is necessary. If so, they will contact the Interpreter Coordinator/Interpreting Department to give a brief summary on the situation and request a CDI. If this is not a school-related situation (i.e. law enforcement interviews; child protective service investigations, medical appointments/care, etc.), MSA will provide the outside agency with contact information necessary to obtain a CDI in those situations. Due to the relative lack of available CDIs, additional time is required to obtain a CDI so administrators are requested to request CDI support as far in advance as possible (minimum notice - 48 hours).
- B. The Interpreter Coordinator/Interpreting Department will schedule a CDI to come in and cover the assignment and provide a hearing interpreter team member if appropriate/needed.
- C. The CDI must be fully certified to work with our students/staff. The interpreter coordinator will maintain documentation of all CDIs on contract with MSA.
- D. Communicate with the MSA Interpreter Coordinator/Interpreting Department if time is running longer than expected and/or a switch of interpreters is needed.
- E. Once the interpreting assignment is completed, document times of the assignment in the notes in the interpreters' internal calendar.

V. PROCESS OF WORKING WITH A CDI

A. As a team member:

Most of the time, a CDI works as a team member with a certified interpreter who is hearing. In some situations, a CDI/hearing interpreter team can communicate more effectively than a hearing interpreter alone or a team of two hearing interpreters or a CDI alone. In the CDI/hearing interpreter team situation, the CDI transmits message content between a deaf consumer and a hearing interpreter; the hearing interpreter transmits message content

between the CDI and a hearing consumer. While this process resembles message relay, it is more than that. Each interpreter receives the message from the source, processes it linguistically and culturally, and then expresses it appropriately to match the target audience. In even more challenging situations, the CDI and hearing interpreter may work together to understand a deaf individual's message, confer with each other to arrive at their best interpretation, then convey that interpretation to the hearing consumer.

B. For DeafBlind Individuals:

When a consumer who is deafblind is involved, the CDI may receive a speaker's message visually, then relay it to the deafblind individual through the sense of touch or at close visual range. This process is not a simple relay in which the CDI sees the signs and copies them for the person who is deafblind. The CDI processes the message then transmits it in a manner most easily understood by the individual who is deafblind.

C. Solo:

The CDI sometimes works as the sole interpreter in a situation. In these instances, the CDI may use sign language, gestures, or other communication supports that are effective with a particular deaf individual; and may use with the hearing consumer a combination of speech, speech reading, residual hearing, and written communication. At MSA, this is not a recommended practice as hearing interpreters are readily available.

D. On the Platform/Stage:

The CDI sometimes functions as an interpreter before an audience. This may involve the CDI watching a hearing interpreter and restating the message to the audience in a more culturally/linguistically accessible way. At other times, the CDI may be in front of the audience to "mirror" comments or questions from a signing member of the audience so that the rest of the audience can see them.