

Speak at your natural pace but be aware that the interpreter may wait to hear and understand a complete thought before beginning to interpret. The interpreter will let you know if you need to repeat or slow down.

Look at and speak directly to the deaf person. Do not say “tell him” or “tell her”. The deaf person will be watching the interpreter and glancing back and forth at you.

When the interpreter speaks, he/she is voicing the words of the deaf individual. The interpreter is not a participant in this interaction. Respond directly to the deaf person.

It is usually best to position the interpreter next to you (the hearing person) or the person presenting the information, opposite the deaf person.

Interpreters and hearing speakers should avoid standing with their backs to windows, bright lights or busy colorful designs. These backgrounds make it difficult to see and receive a clear message. A solid, dark colored backdrop or background is recommended.

The interpreter is present to facilitate communication. If you have questions about the deaf person or sign language, ask the deaf person directly and the interpreter will interpret your questions. The interpreter will not give advice or their personal opinion on anything that is discussed.

TEAMING:

Two interpreters may be assigned to a job, a team, and may consist of two hearing interpreters or one hearing interpreter and one Deaf interpreter.

If two interpreters are assigned to a job due to its length or complexity:

- Allows communication to flow smoothly and minimizes distractions to the meeting process.
- Switching every 20-30 minutes, one interpreter will actively interpret while the other provides back-up support

If two interpreters are assigned to a job due to an individual’s language comprehension:

- Ensures that an individual’s language needs are met.
- Reasons include that the Deaf individual uses a foreign sign language, has minimal language competency, or uses “home” signs, but can also occur for individuals who are non-verbal.
- If you are unsure what the language need for a client is, defer to the experts at your local agency, and the interpreter(s).

PREPARATION:

If you are handing out materials during a class or presentation, give a copy to the interpreter.

- Remember to pause before giving your explanation of any visual aids so that the deaf person has time to see it, look back at the interpreter and continue to keep up with the information being presented.

If showing videos during a class or presentation, please try to show a captioned video. It is difficult for the deaf person to watch a video and the interpreter at the same time. Be sure to run through the captioned video before sharing to make sure the captions adequately match that of the speaker.