



Tips for Using a Sign Language Interpreter

So you have just learned that you will be interfacing and/or needing to communicate with individuals who are Deaf and do not have a really good understanding of how best to do that or to work with a Sign Language Interpreter. Below are just a few tips to assist you in making the best use of a professional that will serve as an extension to you and meet your communication needs.

General Expectations of Assignments with Interpreters

Positioning: The interpreters should know their position prior to the beginning of the presentation. This position will take into account easy transition visibility between the interpreter and presenter, lighting, and multi media presentations.

Interpretation: The interpreter will use sign language to interpret all that is heard or communicated. Likewise, they will use spoken English when a person who is Deaf is communicating through sign language. At no time is the interpreter joining the discussion.

The Interpreting Team: To reduce the risk of repetitive motion injuries, programs lasting over an hour sometimes require two interpreters in order to present the best possible interpretation of the program. The interpreters will switch from primary interpreter to supporting interpreter every 20-30 minutes.

Throughout the assignment you may notice the interpreter continuing to interpret even after you have paused. Also, the interpreter may not begin signing right away at the exact time you begin speaking. This is normal. This allows processing time crucial to provide an accurate interpretation to the Deaf participants.

Making Presentations with Deaf Individuals in the Audience

To improve your presentation for Deaf members who may be in your audience, here are a few things to consider prior to the day of the program.

Handouts: Any outlines, scripts, handouts, agenda, or reference material need to be provided in advance to the interpreter or one of our Scheduling Coordinators.

Setting Up: Before you begin, inform the interpreter so they may get into position.

Speak Naturally: Avoid changing your speech pattern. Do not speak more slowly, loudly, or over-articulate your words, our interpreters will be able to keep up with you.

Visual Aids: Be specific when drawing attention to visual aides. Avoid phrases such as, "Look at this." "Look at that corner." The interpreter cannot see "this and that". Try to use descriptive phrases such as, "...drawing your attention to the bottom left hand corner." This will help the interpreter and improve the quality of your presentation to the Deaf audience.