



New Mexico Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing

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Trilingual Interpreters

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A trilingual Interpreter is an interpreter who facilitates communication among three different languages. In the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, this is generally defined as working between American Sign Language (ASL), English, and an additional spoken language. In New Mexico, the additional spoken language is generally Spanish. The demand for trilingual interpreters is rapidly increasing, and the need for trilingual interpreters is particularly noted in areas with large immigrant and refugee populations.

Trilingual interpreters work in situations that involve an English speaker; a speaker of another language, like Spanish; and an ASL user, but may also be needed in situations where a Deaf or Hard of Hearing person uses American Sign Language but is accustomed to speech-reading spoken Spanish or reads written Spanish. Trilingual interpreters must have language fluency and cultural competence in all three languages in order to effectively and accurately maintain message equivalency in the interpretation.

Most interpreter referral agencies can provide trilingual interpreters, but the requestor must be careful to specifically request a trilingual interpreter and exactly what languages (and dialects, if applicable) will be used in the setting.

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf does not have a certification specific to trilingual interpreting, but the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Board for Evaluation for Interpreters (BEI) Certification Program has developed a trilingual exam for interpreters working in ASL, English, and Spanish. More details can be found at <https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/provider-portals/assistive-services-providers/board-evaluation-interpreters-certification-program/bei-certificates-awarded>.

In almost all situations, trilingual interpreters in New Mexico are required to be licensed by the Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board (SLIPB) at the Regulation and Licensing Department. Please see the NMCDHH Fact Sheet regarding Interpreter Licensure or visit the SLIPB website for more details: <https://www.rld.nm.gov/boards-and-commissions/individual-boards-and-commissions/signed-language-interpreting-practices/>.