



# New Mexico Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing

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Website: [www.cdhh.nm.gov](http://www.cdhh.nm.gov)

## Working with a Signed Language Interpreter

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A signed language interpreter is a specially trained intermediary who facilitates communication between individuals with hearing loss or speech difficulties and those without a hearing loss. Signed language interpreters are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) and English, and may also use other signing systems. Some are also trained in oral interpreting or other communication methods. In New Mexico, all signed language interpreters must be licensed by the Signed Language Interpreting Practice Board (SLIPB) at the New Mexico Regulation and Licensing Department to work in any community or educational settings. Please see the NMCDHH Fact Sheet regarding Interpreter Licensure for more information on this topic, or visit the SLIPB website: <https://www.rld.nm.gov/boards-and-commissions/individual-boards-and-commissions/signed-language-interpreting-practices/>.

### The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA of 1990 requires businesses, public entities, and places of public accommodation to provide equal access for individuals with disabilities, including effective communication. Interpreters are included in the ADA as an 'auxiliary aid' that may assist in providing communication access. For more information about the ADA, visit [www.ADA.gov](http://www.ADA.gov).

### Hiring an Interpreter

Signed language interpreting services may be arranged through a referral agency or privately. There are many benefits to working through a referral agency, including assistance from experts in finding an interpreter who is an appropriate linguistic match for your Deaf client, as well as convenience. Requests should be made approximately two weeks in advance when possible, but interpreters may be available on short notice, and are available on-call for emergency situations. Depending on the situation, two or more interpreters may be necessary to effectively facilitate communication. For more information regarding hiring an interpreter, please see the NMCDHH Fact Sheet entitled "How to Find a Signed Language Interpreter."

### At the Assignment

Signed language interpreters may need to work with the consumer with hearing loss to arrange the physical setting in a manner conducive to visual language, such as allowing for sufficient lighting and sightlines that allow the consumer with hearing loss to see the speaker, the interpreter, and any visual aids simultaneously. When working with an interpreter you should address the person with hearing loss directly, not the interpreter. Be aware of holding your hands or other objects in front of your face that could interfere with communication. Interpreters may ask for advance copies of presentations or other materials that will be involved in the assignment so that they can prepare in advance. The interpreter is responsible to interpret all information, so do not ask the interpreter to not interpret certain aspects of the assignment. If you need to have a private conversation with someone, step out of the room. Interpreting

between English and ASL is challenging work that requires concentration, so individuals who are not directly involved in communicating with the Deaf or Hard of Hearing participant should refrain from engaging the interpreter in conversation while he or she is working. Interpreters should not be expected to supervise the behavior of anyone involved in the interpreting assignment, nor should they be asked to provide advice or opinions.

### **Code of Professional Conduct**

Signed language interpreters are professionals who abide by the Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) promulgated by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). If an interpreter fails to follow the CPC, a complaint may be filed with the RID or with the SLIPB. Both the consumer with hearing loss and the consumer who can hear may file a complaint.

The CPC assures accountability, responsibility, and trust to the individuals served by interpreting professionals.

### **Tenets**

1. Interpreters adhere to standards of confidential communication.
2. Interpreters possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the specific interpreting situation.
3. Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation.
4. Interpreters demonstrate respect for consumers.
5. Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns, and students of the profession.
6. Interpreters maintain ethical business practices.
7. Interpreters engage in professional development.

Further details and the expanded version of the CPC can be found at the RID website: <http://rid.org/ethics/code-of-professional-conduct/>