Recommendations for Agencies Providing ASL Interpreting Services

Introduction

The Northern California Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (NorCRID) and Deaf Counseling Advocacy and Referral Agency (DCARA) have embarked on a joint project to improve the provision of ASL interpreting services in the Bay Area. This paper represents what the community sees as best practices for any agency or interpreter referral company/service engaged in providing ASL services.

This paper is intended for use by the Deaf community, interpreting community and agencies or interpreter referral company/service in the business of providing ASL interpreting services.

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We hope this is a useful guide for you, whether you are a Deaf consumer, interpreter or an agency or interpreter referral company /service.

Recommendations

1. **Sign language interpreting**: It is recommended that any agency or interpreter referral company/service in the business of providing ASL interpreting services become well versed in the field of Sign Language interpreting**.**

Suggested areas of study include:

A thorough understanding of the RID certification system and what it does and does not assess, including a comprehensive list of current and past certifications

The RID Code of Professional Conduct RID.org/ethics/code/index.cfm

The demands placed on interpreters, both physical and mental

Specialized training that is available and which specialized certifications or licensures exist

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), what it covers and how to advocate for compliance

These recommendations can be achieved through formal education such as classes, workshops,

reading journals, subscribing to blogs, among many other resources.
Bay Area resources include:

Berkeley City College, ASL Department   (Berkeleycitycollege.edu/wp/asl)
Ohlone College Deaf Studies Division (Ohlone.edu/instr/deafstudies)
Workshops offered through NorCRID   (NorCRID.org)
Workshops offered through DCARA   (DCARA.org)

Nationwide resources include:

Street Leverage   (Streetleverage.com)
Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Standard Practice papers (RID.org)
NIDG – National Interpreters Discussion Group (NIDG@googlegroups.com)
Information on the ADA   (NAD.org/issues/civil-rights/ADA)
Gallaudet University-online   (Gallaudet.edu/online_programs.html)

2. **Deaf Culture:** It is recommended that any agency or interpreter referral company/service in the business of providing ASL interpreting services become well versed in Deaf Culture.

Areas of study should include:

An historical perspective of the Deaf community,

Deafhood,

An understanding of the language varieties that exist in the Deaf community,

An understanding of Audism.

Formal education, such as classes and workshops in Deaf culture, and other resources include:

Berkeley City College-ASL program   (Berkeleycitycollege.edu/wp/asl)
Ohlone College-Deaf Studies   (Ohlone.edu/instr/deafstudies)
Workshops offered through NorCRID (NORCRID.org)
Workshops offered through DCARA (DCARA.org)
Deafhood Foundation   (Deafhood.us)

3. **Organizational involvement**: It is recommended that agencies maintain membership and be actively

involved in local and national **interpreting organizations**. This will keep agencies abreast of news, issues and concerns in the field of interpreting. Examples are:

> Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf -RID   (RID.org)
> Northern California RID   (NorCRID.org)
> Sacramento Valley RID SavRID (SAVRID.org)
> Central Coast RID CCRID (CCRID.org)

It is recommended that agencies maintain membership and be actively involved in local and national **Deaf organizations**. This will keep agencies abreast of news, issues, resources and concerns in the Deaf community. Examples are:

> National Association of the Deaf (NAD.org)
> California Association of the Deaf (CAD1906.org)
> Deaf Counseling Advocacy and Referral Agency (DCARA.org)
> DeafHope (deaf-hope.org)

4. **Relationship with the Deaf community**: It is recommended that agencies develop a positive relationship with the Deaf community by reaching out and giving back to the community. Examples include:

> Offer financial support to local Deaf events and organizations, such as:
> > DCARA
> > California School for the Deaf, Fremont
> > Deaf Hope
> Provide pro bono interpreting services for events
> Attend community events
> Offer scholarships
> Collect and respond to feedback from consumers and interpreters

5. **Responsive to Deaf consumers' needs.** Agencies should strive to be responsive to the needs of Deaf consumers, and to alter service provision as necessary and appropriate. This includes but is not limited to:

> > Providing interpreters who are well versed in the Deaf person's profession, specialized language/vocabulary needs,
> > Providing interpreters with the skill set the Deaf person requests. This can include language skills as well as professional demeanor to match the needs of the assignment.
> > Advocating for and providing a CDI when needed

6. **Feedback**: It is recommended that agencies offer multiple ways for feedback to be provided by Deaf consumers, hearing consumers and interpreters. Feedback should be welcome and accepted in writing, verbally or in ASL (via video).

7. **Screening of interpreters**: It is recommended that agencies hire a team of qualified Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs) and hearing interpreters for consultation and to advise agencies on how to screen, hire and place interpreters. CDIs, Deaf individuals themselves, are best equipped/suited to understand the language, and being RID certified are well versed in the profession of interpreting. Self-identified experts may or may not meet the qualifications of CDIs. Sources of Deaf and hearing experts:

> Deaf Counseling Advocacy and Referral Agency-DCARA (DCARA.org)
> NorCRID (NorCRID.org)
> Sacramento Valley RID SavRID (Savrid.org)
> Central Coast RID CCRID (CCRID.org)
> Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID.org)

According to the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct, in maintaining ethical business practices, interpreters must provide documentation of qualifications when requested. Agencies by extension have the ethical obligation to verify interpreter qualifications. It is recommended that agencies require interpreters to submit proof of current RID membership and certification (i.e. valid membership card), resume, references, and any other credentials to verify experience, licensure and training in specialized settings. Beyond that, it is recommended agencies further screen interpreters. RID certification is an entry-level assessment of skill. Interpreters bring other skills and knowledge to the work. An interpreter's background should be taken into consideration, including higher education, continuing education, specialized training and certification in fields such as healthcare, theater, legal. Agencies should rely on reputable sources, such as CDIs, to determine interpreter qualifications.

8. **Assessment of qualification to take assignments:** It is expected that interpreters utilize their professional judgment and ethical mandate to assess their own qualifications and ability to take an interpreting assignment. It is recommended that agencies defer to the interpreter's assessment of her qualifications and ability. However, reliance upon credentials, experience, training and consumer/team interpreter feedback is crucial. Agency or interpreter referral company/service coordinators may not know the nuances of a particular assignment or client. Interpreters are bound by the Code of Professional Conduct to take assignments that are within their skill level.

> Registry of interpreters for the Deaf Code of Professional Conduct (RID.org)

9. **Determining language needs:** It is recommended that agencies defer to the Deaf client in determining what mode of language is preferred for the interpreter to use. This may include but not be limited to: ASL, English, PSE, SEE, Oral, International Sign, Tactile, Close Vision etc. This determination needs to be taken into consideration when selecting/hiring an interpreter.

10. **Use of Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs)/Deaf Interpreters (DIs):** It is recommended that agencies use CDIs /qualified DIs when requested by either the hearing interpreter, the hearing consumer

or the Deaf individual. To learn more about CDIs, consult with CDIs/qualified DIs to determine the factors which make this a best practice. Aso, see the RID standard practice paper:

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf   (RID.org)
Deaf Interpreter Institute (DIinstitute.org)

11. **Intake process:** It is recommended that agencies maintain a comprehensive list of questions to ask during the intake process for assignments to ensure that adequate and complete information is collected and subsequently provided to interpreters. Example:

1. Full address of the interpreting location (street address, building number, room number, cross street)

2. Contact info: Name, text, email address and phone number of on site contact

3. Client's full name

4. Client's language preference

5. Medical number if applicable

6. Actual start time versus arrival time and end time. This is necessary because interpreters usually arrive on site 10-15 minutes prior to start of interpreting time.

7. Parking arrangements

8. Meals: are they included or should interpreters bring their own food? Is it a working lunch or will interpreters be able to leave the site to eat?

9. Is there anything unusual about getting to the location or site? (Security concerns, badging for conference, getting on stage, etc)

10. Name of event and event sponsor. This information is often helpful when an event is in a large hotel with multiple events occurring.

11. Nature of the event. In depth information helps an interpreter determine if she is qualified. For example, for a conference: Is it a plenary type conference? Are there break out sessions or workshops? How long does each workshop last? What subject does the conference address? (For example: NOT "computer conference" but rather World Wide Web Developers conference.)

12. Are there materials available for the interpreter to prep, such as programs, papers, websites, lyrics to music and/or a list of presenters' names, copies of lecture notes, talking points, powerpoint slides

13. Are there any special considerations for the interpreter such as expected attire, protective equipment, proximity to anything of concern (chemicals etc), etc.

Agencies should provide complete information to interpreters when assigning a job. Information should include:

1-13 above as well as team name and team's contact information, if applicable

12. **Consistency of service:** It is recommended that agencies or interpreter referral company/service strive to provide consistency in service. Agencies or interpreter referral company/service should honor consumer choice and preference when assigning interpreters. In the event that an agency or interpreter referral company/service takes over a contract from another agency or interpreter referral company/service, every effort should be made to discuss with the client who preferred interpreters are and, after confirming the qualifications of regular interpreters and consumer preferences, every effort should be made to maintain continuity by retaining the regular interpreters who have developed a relationship with the Deaf and hearing consumers and familiarity with site-specific terminology.

13. **Subcontracting:** It is recommended that Spoken Language Agencies develop a relationship with local Sign Language Agencies to sub-contract out work when necessary in order to provide the best service possible.

We sincerely appreciate your diligence in adopting these recommendations as it will improve the quality of ASL interpreting services in the San Francisco Bay Area. We encourage you to contact DCARA or NorCRID if you have questions or wish to consult with someone regarding these recommendations.

Resource List

National Organization and Local Affiliate Chapters

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf -RID   RID.org
Northern California RID   NorCRID.org

Sacramento Valley RID SavRID SAVRID.org
Central Coast RID CCRID CCRID.org

Certification and Standard Practice Papers

The RID Code of Professional Conduct RID.org/ethics/code/index.cfm
Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Standard Practice papers RID.org

Deaf Interpreters

Deaf interpreters Institute DIinstitute.org

Local Education and Workshops

Berkeley City College, ASL Department Berkeleycitycollege.edu/wp/asl
Ohlone College Deaf Studies Division Ohlone.edu/instr/deafstudies
Northern California RID   NorCRID.org
Sacramento Valley RID SavRID SAVRID.org
Central Coast RID CCRID CCRID.org
Deaf Counseling Advocacy and Referral Agency DCARA.org

Online Information

Street Leverage   Streetleverage.com
NIDG – National Interpreters Discussion Group NIDG@googlegroups.com
Information on the ADA: NAD.org/issues/civil-rights/ADA
Gallaudet University-online   Gallaudet.edu/online_programs.html
Deafhood Foundation   Deafhood.us

Deaf organizations

National Association of the Deaf NAD.org
California Association of the Deaf CAD1906.org
Deaf Counseling Advocacy and Referral Agency DCARA.org
DeafHope deaf-hope.org