

SIGN LANGUAGE AND DEAF INTERPRETER



INFORMATION AND TIPS

DeafBlind Ontario Services provides an array of services to people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, non-verbal and deafblind that are customized to each individual's unique needs, method of communication, and goals to enrich their life.

What is a Sign Language Interpreter? ¹

American Sign Language (ASL) and langue des signes quebecoise (LSQ) are both languages with their own grammar and syntax. ASL and LSQ are visual languages expressed through hand movements, facial expressions, and body movements. Sign language interpreters have hearing and can facilitate communication between Deaf and hearing people using ASL or LSQ.

What is a Deaf Interpreter (DI)?

A Deaf interpreter (DI) is a person who is Deaf; like an ASL or LSQ interpreter, the DI is highly skilled to translate from one language to another. A DI and an ASL or LSQ interpreter work together. The ASL or LSQ interpreter will first interpret English or French to the DI and then the DI transfers the meaning to an alternate form of communication.²

A DI may be used for a Deaf individual who is from another country, does not use ASL or LSQ as a first language, or has a developmental disability.

Scheduling an Interpreter

To ensure accessible communication for a Deaf person, it is important to hire certified Sign Language and Deaf interpreters. For an interpreter to become certified in Canada, they must be a graduate of an ASL-English Interpreting Program (AEIP), have committed to following the Canadian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (CASLI) Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct (COEGPC) and is subjected to CASLI's Professional Conduct Review Process (PCRP).³

Resources for scheduling certified interpreters:

- Canadian Hearing Services (CHS)
- Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters
- Canadian Association of Sign Language Interpreters

[1] <https://www.casli.ca/FAQ>

[2] <https://www.casli.ca/>

[3] <https://www.casli.ca/>

1. Look and speak directly to the person who is Deaf, not the interpreter. Avoid personal conversations with the interpreter; they are working as a means of language transmission and are not a participant.
2. Speak in first person and use ordinary language, tone, volume, and pace. Avoid using phrases such as “tell her” and “explain to him”.
3. Avoid using acronyms. If you use a word that the interpreter is unfamiliar with, they may ask you to spell it. The interpreter must interpret everything that is said; never ask the interpreter to refrain from interpreting some of what you say.
4. If you are distributing an agenda, minutes, or other written material, ensure you offer a copy to both the Deaf person and the interpreter. Providing materials in advance helps the interpreter to better prepare and ensure the meeting/ conversation runs smoothly.
5. Ensure that the meeting room has good lighting and the interpreter can be seen clearly. If the lights need to be dimmed during the presentation, ensure a small directional spotlight is used so that the interpreter is visible.
6. Only one person at a time should speak at the meeting, otherwise it can be distracting and make it difficult for the interpreter to follow the main conversation.
7. When moving from one speaker to another, identify who is speaking next by taking a slight pause or a show of hands.
8. Schedule breaks every hour, and if you haven't, ask the Deaf person if they need a break.
9. Avoid saying that the interpreter is for the Deaf only. Interpreters are there for both the hearing and the Deaf.
10. If you are unsure of the appropriate way to proceed in a particular situation, just ask.

1. For large presentations, it is recommended that only the main speaker(s), the interpreter, and the Deaf person have their videos turned on. This helps the Deaf person focus on the interpreter and helps everyone else give their full attention to the speaker.
2. If participants must turn on their videos, ensure the Deaf person and the interpreter have permission to spotlight each other.
3. Schedule brief breaks every 30 minutes during a virtual meeting or presentation. It is difficult for both the Deaf person and the interpreter to focus intensely on a 2D image and within a small area on screen.
4. When a screen is shared, many virtual meeting platforms minimize videos into small windows, making it difficult for interpreters and Deaf people to communicate. Some platforms like Zoom let you view the spotlighted speaker only and alter the size of the image. Settings can also be adjusted to show the speaker and the shared screen side by side.
5. Use the chat tool to guide questions and answers directed by the host.
6. During a discussion, say your name before you speak. This helps the interpreter tell the Deaf person who is speaking.



[4] <https://www.edi.nih.gov/blog/communities/10-tips-using-sign-language-interpreter>

[5] https://deafunity.org/article_interview/tips-on-using-zoom-with-a-sign-language-interpreter/