



NEBRASKA

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Tips for Working with a Licensed Sign Language Interpreter
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Tips for Working with a Licensed Sign Language Interpreter

Many times school districts are working with Licensed Sign Language Interpreters for meetings, conferences, and events that individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing are attending, without much guidance on how to accomplish this. The following list is guidance to assist districts with the process of working with sign language interpreters. Note, this is not educational sign language interpreters that are serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing through the IEP/IFSP process.

- For licensed sign language interpreters, the district would need to contact a licensed sign language interpreter directly or contact an agency that has sign language interpreters on staff. A list of licensed interpreters and agencies that provide licensed interpreters can be found on the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) website, <https://ncdhh.nebraska.gov/referral-service/find-an-interpreter>

Before the event/meeting:

- Ask the individual who is deaf or hard of hearing what type of interpreter they prefer (for example: American Sign Language, Signed Exact English, tactile sign language for deaf-blind, using combination with lip reading, would they like a sign language interpreter for certain situations).
- Provide the interpreter, whenever possible, with any written materials ahead of time so that they can review vocabulary and clarify any technical terms, acronyms, and/or jargon.
- If possible, meet the interpreter beforehand so you both have the opportunity to clarify any possible language issues.
- Allow the interpreter and the individual who is deaf or hard of hearing to guide you in setting up the room to maximize communication (seating arrangements, lighting, etc.).
- Usually, the interpreter will sit or stand beside the speaker so that the person who is deaf or hard of hearing can access communication from both the speaker and interpreter.
- Remember that the individual who is deaf or hard of hearing may have trouble hearing you if there are other people talking, (i.e. any kind of group situation or meeting). So, if you need to discuss something specific with the person who is deaf or hard of hearing, it might be better to speak with them alone in a quiet office, rather than where there are other people talking.

During the event/meeting:

- Speak naturally at your normal pace. The interpreter will ask you to slow down or repeat if necessary.
- Say only things that you want to be interpreted. The interpreter ethically must interpret everything they hear (example, phone calls, sidebar conversations, etc.).
- There is a time delay when translating between two languages (e.g. English to ASL). Allow individual who is deaf or hard of hearing ample time to receive the message and to respond.
- Maintain eye contact with individual who is deaf or hard of hearing. The interpreter is there to facilitate the communication between you and the individual who is deaf or hard of hearing, so avoid directing comments to the interpreter (i.e. "Tell him...." or "Ask her....")
- In a group setting, remember that an interpreter can only interpret one speaker at a time, so only allow one person to speak at a time. (have ground rules for meetings)
- Remember that the individual who is deaf or hard of hearing will have trouble hearing you when there is background noise, so try and keep it to a minimum (turn off radio, fan, close door).
- Keep movement to minimum while speaking to a person with a hearing difference. Continuous movement will make it difficult for the person who is deaf or hard of hearing to read your lips and facial expressions.
- Remember to never turn your back to an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing while engaging in a communication exchange, and always respect all forms of communication by engaging in the conversation (e.g. don't start walking away while talking to an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing).
- If the individual who is deaf or hard of hearing turns away (e.g. to check something on a computer, to look down to read written material), stop talking until he/she looks at you again.
- Using an interpreter is not meant to be difficult or overwhelming. If there is something you are unsure of, just ask the individual who is deaf or hard of hearing.
- Remember that listening and/or lip-reading is mentally and physically exhausting. Sometimes the individual who is deaf or hard of hearing needs some time to 'recover.'