

Professional Sign Language Interpreting Agencies

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc., (RID) Standard Practice Paper (SPP) provides a framework of basic, respectable standards for RID members' professional work and conduct with consumers. This paper also provides specific information about the practice setting. This document is intended to raise awareness, educate, guide and encourage sound basic methods of professional practice. The SPP should be considered by members in arriving at an appropriate course of action with respect to their practice and professional conduct. It is hoped that the standards will promote commitment to the pursuit of excellence in the practice of interpreting and be used for public distribution and advocacy.

About Professional Sign Language Interpreting Agencies

This paper considers "Interpreting agency" to include both non-profit and for-profit entities, as well as those individuals and groups who coordinate sign language interpreting services in larger organizations such as school disability coordinators, etc.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects Deaf people's human right to access spoken language in their preferred mode of communication. Professional sign language agencies are dedicated to providing appropriate services to this protected group. These agencies coordinate, schedule, and dispatch qualified professional interpreters in a knowledgeable and ethical manner. They adhere to the tenets of the NAD-RID [Code of Professional Conduct](#) (CPC) and follow best practices as outlined in the RID [Standard Practice Papers](#). They work in accordance with all applicable Federal and State laws, regulations and policies. It is of great importance that they have a thorough knowledge of the Deaf community, the ADA, and the sign language interpreting profession.

Value of Working with Professional Sign Language Interpreting Agencies

Managing interpreting assignments is a complex process. Professional Sign Language Interpreting Agencies provide a depth of understanding of the wide range of language and cultural variance of the consumers involved in assignments, including ethnic diversity, disabilities such as blindness or cognitive impairments, and regional variations. They also consider the environmental and situational needs influencing the work. Utilizing their experience and expertise, they match these specific needs with the competencies and possible specializations of the interpreters they use.

The Professional Sign Language Interpreting Agency serves three participants in any interpreting situation: the Clients/Requestors, the End Users/Consumers, and the Service Providers/Interpreters.

For CLIENTS/REQUESTERS, Professional interpreting agencies are a single and convenient point of contact to:

- Access an up-to-date pool of qualified and available interpreters
- Verify interpreting credentials, education, experience, and areas of specialty, as well as any specific requirements such as immunization or background check documentation
- Facilitate adherence to the ADA, HIPAA and other pertinent regulations
- Procure sign language interpreters who are able to satisfy the specific staffing requirements of an assignment
- Manage short-notice requests and unexpected changes
- Provide a confidential way for end users/consumers and clients/requestors to provide feedback
- Mediate conflicts, problems and complaints for all consumers (Deaf, hearing and interpreter)

For END USERS/CONSUMERS, Professional sign language interpreting agencies:

- Describe how an interpreted interaction may work
- Utilize their experience and knowledge of interpreting situations and the Deaf community to provide appropriately skilled interpreters who understand the unique communication needs of the parties involved
- Advocate for using interpreters with native cultural and linguistic competence
- Ensure that all private information regarding the request is kept confidential
- Strive for continuity of services and consistency of interpreters placed in ongoing jobs whenever possible
- Provide a confidential process to both request and give feedback about particular interpreters' capabilities before and after the assignment, ensuring that the feedback can be expressed in the communication mode best suited to the consumer (written and video)
- Actively solicit input and involvement from Deaf stakeholders

For SERVICE PROVIDERS/INTERPRETERS, Professional sign language interpreting agencies:

- Make it convenient to secure work at a variety of venues
- Establish and define the working relationship regarding employment status (employee or contractor)
- Have clearly articulated policies regarding the working relationship
- Offer assignments based on the on the interpreter's qualifications, credentials, and experience
- Select teams of interpreters that work well together
- Provide essential information regarding the specific requirements of an assignment
- Indicate and gather preparation materials that assist the interpreter (e.g., scripts, lectures, pre-reading material)
- Arrange for access to presenters by the assigned interpreters
- Solicit any information about the job that would impact the interpreters (e.g., size of audience, duration, formality)
- Provide administrative functions which may include advertising, billing, payroll, and advocacy
- Support last minute needs which affect the assignment
- Promote the development of interpreters' skills and comfort in various venues

Key Responsibilities of Professional Sign Language Interpreting Agencies

Professional sign language interpreting agencies will:

- Maintain regular availability to accept requests for assignments
- Respond in a timely manner to all requests
- Maintain communication with the requesting party regarding the assignment
- Provide the most appropriately qualified interpreter available for the assignment
- Afford opportunities for feedback from participants
- Establish mechanisms to monitor and improve the quality of the services provided

Established Policies

A professional Sign Language agency has developed clearly stated policies regarding booking, scheduling, billing, payment, and dispute resolution. It is knowledgeable about the RID Standard Practice Papers, adapting its policies to reflect these standards of the profession.

Interpreter selection

There are industry standards as to qualification that a professional sign language agency adheres to regarding the process of recruitment, identification and screening of interpreters. It is able to assess the professional and ethical practices of the individuals it works with. It gathers feedback from the Deaf and

Hard of Hearing consumers to ensure it has accurate information. Likewise, there are industry standards regarding coordination of services, based on client specific language needs, and interpreters' skills and experience. Mutual satisfaction can be measured by the extent of support from the local Deaf community, the businesses that use their services and the interpreters who choose to work with the agency.

Administration

A Professional Sign Language Interpreting agency employs individuals who through a combination of education and experience have a broad understanding of the issues regarding access to interpreting services. Collectively, it is their job to accurately represent the profession and the complexities of coordinating interpreting services to the public. These people also possess knowledge of the cultural and geographic characteristics of the area they are serving, and use that information to make well informed decisions for interpreter assignment.

Conclusion

RID supports Professional Sign Language Interpreting Agencies incorporating the tenets of the Code of Professional Conduct and those found in the Standard Practice Papers into their business practices. RID believes that when interpreting agencies conduct themselves in an ethical manner, supporting industry standards, all parties benefit.

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID)

RID has played the leading role in establishing a national standard of quality for interpreters, and is committed to continued professionalism in the practice of signed language interpretation. For more information about the profession, certification, and interpreting throughout the United States, contact RID. Please visit the RID website at www.rid.org

References:

- NAD/RID Code of Professional Conduct at www.rid.org
- RID Standard Practice Papers at www.rid.org