

Best Practice When Using an American Sign Language Interpreter or a Captioner

1. American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters are used for individuals that sign.
 - a. Ask the client where they would like the interpreter to be positioned. In most cases, the interpreter is as near to the main speaker as possible.
 - b. Keep eye contact with the client and address the client directly, not the interpreter.
 - c. Avoid making statements, such as, "Tell him...".
 - d. Avoid using acronyms or technical words without stating their full meaning.
 - e. Whenever possible, provide prep material (agendas, copies of assessments, etc.) ahead of time.
 - f. Allow a few minutes before starting to have a pre-session where you review names, the goals of the meeting, and any concerns such as safety issues.
2. DPP clients who are deaf or hard of hearing and do not sign must also have access to other accommodations including but not limited to assistive listening devices, note takers, or CART (Computer Assisted Real Time Captioning).
 - a. The captioner is typically near the speaker so they can hear who is speaking.
 - b. Allow enough room for the captioner to set up equipment including a wall screen and/or individual iPads for seeing the captions.
 - c. Allow a few minutes before starting to have a pre-session where you review names, the goals of the meeting, and any concerns such as safety issues.
3. If speaking with a client that reads lips, face the person directly and speak naturally. Be aware of how lighting may affect speechreading.
4. Additional time should be allowed for investigations, home visits, meetings, and other points of contact.
5. Remember the interpreter/captioner will interpret everything that is said, spoken, or signed (including side conversations that can be heard).
6. Remember the interpreter/captioner is there to facilitate communication, not to give his/her opinions, advice, etc. The only exception being the interpreter offering advice on any translation disparities or differences.
7. Two interpreters may be necessary depending on the length and complexity of the request, as both requires physical and mental stamina and endurance. They will work in 20 minute increments in these situations. Captioners should be given a break every hour.
8. Staff must cancel within a 24-48 hour timeframe if services are no longer needed or the agency will be charged the full amount for the time requested.
9. A relative or friend should not be used to avoid conflicts of interest, ensure accuracy, and to ensure the impartiality of interpreting provided.
10. A child's school ASL interpreter should only be used in an emergency or linguistically relevant situation due to the risk of an unethical and dual relationship.
11. Understanding should be confirmed with the client, which may also include pre/post meetings with the interpreter to ensure communication was effective.
Staff should document the interpreter's name, license number and credentials.