

General Job Description for Educational Interpreters

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Overview of Position

The interpreter provides interpreting and/or transliterating services for Deaf consumers and hearing consumers in the educational environment. This environment includes classrooms, field trips, assemblies, counseling sessions, club meetings, extracurricular activities, IEP meetings, and other educational settings. The interpreter facilitates communication through use of sign language, spoken English, cultural mediation, and knowledge about visual accessibility.

Qualifications

The interpreter must show evidence of current professional credentials from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, National Association of the Deaf, American Consortium of Certified Interpreters, American Consortium of Certified Interpreters, or other sanctioned testing system. For a list of credential descriptors, see <http://www.deafnix.com/Interpreting/descriptors.html>.

Pay Scale

According to the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (2006), "(Interpreter) salaries will vary depending on many factors. These include a) geographical area (rural areas tend to pay less than urban areas), b) education, c) amount of experience, and d) credentials. Some interpreters work freelance and earn anywhere from \$12-\$40/hour, but they may not be able to schedule a full forty hours per week. They do not get employee benefits. Other interpreters work for an agency, business, government organization or school system. Depending on many factors, these staff employees may earn anywhere between \$15,000-\$30,000+ per year... Highly skilled and credentialed interpreters, usually in metropolitan cities, can earn up to \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year" (<http://www.rid.org/terpfaq.html>).

Please also see these resources:

"Georgia School System Establishes Equitable Salary Scale" –

<http://www.rid.org/scale.pdf>

"Postsecondary Interpreter Salary Survey Results" - http://www.pepnet.org/news_article_salary.asp

Job Duties

Communication

- provide interpreting and/or transliterating services for deaf consumers and hearing consumers in the educational environment
- facilitate communication through use of sign language, spoken English, cultural mediation, and knowledge about accessibility
- interpret within:
 - social and academic settings
 - direct and overheard conversations
 - class instruction, lectures, and tests
 - assemblies, field trips, etc.

Confidentiality

- keep all assignment-related information strictly confidential
- encourage staff members to collaborate with each other instead of using the interpreter as a source of information
- if requested, give information to the IEP team about the student's skills regarding use of interpreting services
- do not give include opinions about the student's academic or social progress
- refer questions about improvement, grades, etc. to the teacher

Professionalism

- follow the NAD-RID Professional Code of Conduct (<http://www.rid.org/coe.html>)
- render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker, using the language most readily understood by the person(s) being served
- never counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions into interpreted situations
- accept assignments using discretion with regard to skill, setting, and the consumers involved
- function in a manner appropriate to each interpreted situation, demonstrating professional appearance, conduct, and promptness
- strive to further knowledge and skills through participation in workshops, professional meetings, interaction with professional colleagues, and reading of current literature in the field
- strive to maintain high professional standards by virtue of professional membership, certification, and ethical practices

Other

- prepare for demanding course material as necessary for successful interpreting/transliterating
- educate consumers about using interpreting services and providing visual access to deaf and hard of hearing students
- assist in education of staff about note-takers and captioned materials
- other responsibilities such as tutoring, supervising, disciplining, and evaluating students are also inappropriate and cause confusion about the interpreter's role

Possible Prerequisites to Work in Public Schools

- fingerprinting and background check
- tuberculosis screening
- mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse
 - As a service provider working with, observing, or having knowledge of children as part of your official duties, you are required by law to report every instance of child abuse which becomes known to you or which you have reason to suspect to have occurred to a child with whom you have professional contact. You must report your observations to a Child Protective Agency immediately, or as soon as practically possible, by telephone and send a written report to the Child Protective Agency within 36 hours after you become aware of the abuse of the child. Your duty to report is individual and no supervisor or administrator may impede or inhibit your duty to report, although you are requested to send a copy of your report to your supervisor or administrator. Your failure to report instances of child abuse known or reasonably suspected by you is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to six months in jail or by fine of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) or by both. (California Penal Code Section 11166.5)

Additional Policies and Procedures

Assignment Length:

Interpreting assignments may vary in length, depending on the school schedule. The schedule may require multiple part-time interpreters and/or full-time interpreters to ensure coverage of all classes and activities.

Travel:

The interpreter will be paid for (1) hour of travel time per assignment.

Cancellations:

The interpreter may bill the entire amount for each assignment cancellation with less than 24 hours notice.

No-Shows:

If the deaf student does not arrive at school within 30 minutes of the scheduled start-time, the interpreter should report this to the interpreter coordinator. If the student is absent or truant, the assignment is considered a billable cancellation and the interpreter is released to accept other interpreting assignments. If the deaf student is not in class, it the school administration's responsibility to follow-up on this matter. The interpreter must not be asked to perform non-related duties, even in the event of the student's absence.

Substitute Interpreters:

In the event that the interpreter will not be able to interpret an assignment, the interpreter must contact _____ (Coordinator of Interpreting Services, an administrator, etc.). Substitute interpreters are provided by _____ (local interpreting agency) at _____ (contact information). The interpreter must not subcontract any assignment, or portion thereof, to any other interpreter.

Team Interpretation:

All assignments will be interpreted solo (one interpreter), unless team interpretation seems necessary to maintain the interpreter's physical safety and/or to ensure interpretations with minimal errors. Team interpreting is required for lecture courses, meetings, etc. that continue longer than 45 minutes. A team interpreting approach is appropriate to allow rest time in order to avoid overuse injuries and provide support and cues during challenging assignments.

Suitability:

Some assignments may be refused (at the interpreter's discretion or the interpreter coordinator's discretion) due to skill issues, conflicts of interest, or personal reasons. A substitute interpreter will be necessary for this type of situation.

Non-Interpreting Time:

The interpreter will be paid during breaks, meals, planning periods, etc. Any time spent at an assignment site should be considered billable time. Expected work hours must be established prior to each assignment.

Professional Development Opportunities:

The employer may chose to offer professional development opportunities and/or reimbursement for conference and workshop fees. A library of sign language videos and technical sign dictionaries is also a wise investment in professional development.

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Evaluation:

The interpreter's skills and professional conduct should be evaluated at least once per academic year. This documentation should be maintained by the interpreter coordinator, including evaluations by Deaf consumers, hearing consumers, and a self-evaluation. Current credentials must be maintained by the interpreter at all times.

Parking & ID Requirements:

As a school district staff member or vendor, the interpreter may be assigned a parking space and ID card/nametag to be worn on-campus.

Suggestions for Recruiting Professional Interpreters:

- advertise in professional interpreting publications, such as VIEWS (newsletter published by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf – <http://www.rid.org>)
- email listserves and newsletters for local interpreters
- contact local sign language interpreting agencies and deaf service centers
- create a mentorship program for novice interpreters from Interpreter Training Programs
- offer attractive hiring contracts with incentives such as:
- health insurance benefits
- retirement savings plans
- flexible hours (part-time and full-time opportunities)
- pay rates comparable to local freelance rates
- monetarily supported professional development
- paid holidays
- sick leave

Terms

interpreting =

target language: American Sign Language (ASL)

source language: Spoken English

(and vice versa)

transliterating =

target language: contact sign language or manually coded English (MCE)

source language: Spoken English

(and vice versa)

The choice between interpretation and transliteration should be based on the individual student's primary communication and language mode. This should be determined by the IEP team based on observation of the student's successful communication experiences, *not on a district-wide philosophy of language*. It is important to note that this choice is based mainly on context and the deaf consumer's preferences.

Resources

“Educational Interpreting: How It Can Succeed”, Elizabeth A. Winston, Editor (2004)
<http://gupress.gallaudet.edu/excerpts/EItoc.html>

“Best Practices in Educational Interpreting”, Brenda Chafin-Seal (1998), Needham Heights, MA:
Allyn & Bacon.

“Odyssey – Educational Interpreting” (2001) <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/Odyssey/Winter-Spring2001/index.html>

“Empowering the Young Deaf Community”, by Amy Frasu (2003)
<http://www.deaflinx.com/Interpreting/empower.html>

“Working with an ASL-English Interpreter & Providing Visual Accessibility for Deaf Students”, by
Amy Frasu (2005)
<http://www.deaflinx.com/Interpreting/students.html>

For more information, please contact amy.frasu@deaflinx.com.

Amy Frasu has worked as a community interpreter in California, Texas, Washington DC, and Florida. Amy earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Deaf Education and Elementary Education from Flagler College. In 2005, she graduated with honors from Gallaudet University with her Master of Arts degree in Interpretation. Amy has been an ASL-English interpreter since 1994 and has worked in a variety of settings, including: medical appointments, business meetings, conferences, video relay service, theater, k-12 schools, undergraduate courses, and graduate courses.

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