

## Working with ASL interpreters

This information is provided by the Minnesota Department of Health's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Division.

- Discuss unique vocabulary, technical terms, acronyms, jargon, seating arrangements, lighting, and other needs prior to beginning.
- Provide the interpreter with any written materials (including Power Points) ahead of time.
- Provide a clear view of the speaker and interpreter.
- Offer the interpreter space near the speaker. This allows deaf or hard of hearing participants to pick up visual cues and expressions of the speaker and see any presentation materials.
- In small group discussions, consider using a circle or semi-circle seating arrangement instead of a theater-style arrangement.
- Provide good lighting. Good lighting helps the participants see the interpreter clearly.
- Do not place the interpreter in front of a window if blinds cannot be adjusted.
- If lights will be turned off or dimmed, make sure the interpreter can still be seen clearly. If necessary, use a spotlight or a small lamp to direct light toward the interpreter. Speak naturally
- Speak at your normal pace. Interpreters will ask you to slow down or repeat if necessary.
- Interpreters listen for concepts and ideas, not just words, to render an accurate Interpretation.
- Know that everything the interpreter hears will be interpreted.
- Do not ask the interpreter to censor any portion of the conversation.
- Ask the deaf or hard of hearing person directly if they are following the conversation.
- Ask participants to speak one at a time.
- An interpreter can only interpret for one speaker at a time. Remind the group to take turns speaking.
- If you are facilitating a group discussion, be aware that the interpreter will be several seconds behind. Pause before recognizing the next speaker to allow the interpreter to finish with the current speaker.
- Ask participants to identify themselves by name before speaking.
- Maintain eye contact with the deaf or hard of hearing person.
- Speak directly to the deaf or hard of hearing person.
- Avoid directing comments to the interpreter. Do not say "Tell him..." or "Ask her..."
- Do not ask the interpreter to comment on the content of the meeting
- Interpreters follow a code of ethics that requires impartiality and confidentiality with all assignment-related information.
- Do not assume the interpreter knows the deaf person or will be interpreting future appointments.
- Provide a short break every hour; interpreting is mentally and physically taxing.
- Do not expect the interpreter to interpret during these breaks.