

# Tips for Working with an American Sign Language Interpreter

## Assure the individual understands the interpreter's role

Explain to the individual that the interpreter is there to help facilitate communication, to help them understand what is being said and allow them to fully participate.



## Scheduling the meeting

- Schedule meetings at the Deaf individual's best time of day.
- Plan extra time for this meeting. Being short on time leads to ineffective communication.
- Ensure the meeting location will be accessible. Remember, Deaf individuals absorb information visually.
- If you will be using written notes or a presentation for the meeting, provide a copy to the interpreter as soon as you can.

## Prior to starting the meeting

- Familiarize the interpreter with essential information like who, what, where, and why.
- Allow for time before the meeting for the interpreter to talk with the individual so that they can become comfortable with their communication skills (team members may have to support/explain some of the individual's communication).
- Please be aware that it may take numerous tries for the individual to accept a new person.
- If virtual, make sure the interpreter is pinned to the screen and is large enough to be seen



# Tips for Working with an American Sign Language Interpreter (pg 2)

## Set ground rules for the meeting

To ensure best communication between all parties, set ground rules. They may include:

- Speak clearly and in a normal tone and speed.
- Avoid metaphors, acronyms, slang, or idioms.
- Pause between subjects or thoughts.
- Don't interrupt when the individual is signing, and the interpreter is interpreting.
- Speak directly to the non-English speaker, not the interpreter.
- The interpreter is only there to interpret for the individual and to provide understanding.
- Do not use phrases like "tell them I said..."
- Never ask the interpreter to not sign some information. This is unethical and against the interpreter's code of ethics.
- Only one person speaks at a time.
- Don't talk when the interpreter is not interpreting

If the meeting is virtual:

- if showing something written on the screen, make sure you give the individual time to read it before speaking. The Deaf person can't read slide and watch interpreter at same time



Questions? Contact  
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