

## What is American Sign Language?

American Sign Language is a visual language used by some individuals who are Deaf. The shape, placement and movement of the hands as well as facial expressions all play important parts in conveying information. ASL has its own unique rules of grammar and syntax. It is not a manual form of English.

## When do I need to provide an interpreter?

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, (ADA) and other statutes (NJ Law Against Discrimination and Section 504), public entities are required to provide a qualified sign language interpreter upon request.

## Who is a “Qualified” Interpreter?

A qualified interpreter must have a current certification by the Registry of interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.. This person has received

years of specialized formal training to be able to communicate effectively, accurately and impartially both receptively and expressively using any necessary distinctive vocabulary. Sign language students, relatives and friends of people who are Deaf are NOT qualified interpreters.

## Who Pays for an Interpreter?

Under Titles I, II, and III of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), employers, state and local government agencies, places of public accommodation, including schools, healthcare providers, banks, groups hosting meetings, workshops or seminars including treatment and prevention activities are required by law, to hire and pay for interpreters upon request.

## When do I need more than one certified interpreter?

As a general rule, two certified interpreters are needed when the assignment is two hours or more in duration.

## What is a Deaf Interpreter and when is one needed?

RID defines a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) as someone who has demonstrated knowledge and understanding of interpreting, deafness, the Deaf community and Deaf culture. A CDI has specialized training when interpreting in circumstances such as; bridging a cultural or linguistic gap or when the person for whom the interpreter is hired has a minimum language competence, or for minors since many children that are Deaf are born to hearing parents.

## How do I find a qualified interpreter?

RID interpreters can be identified by calling the Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at 1-800-792-8339 or 609-588-2648 Monday – Friday (8:30-4:30). More information can be found on the website at; [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/services](http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/services)

## How long does it take to get an interpreter?

For planned events, it is recommended that an interpreter be scheduled two weeks in advance. For more emergent events, call the Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at 1-800-792-8339 or 609-588-2648 [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/services](http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/services)

## What are common misconceptions that should be avoided?

- All person who are Deaf can read lips.
- Family members who know some sign language can be used as a certified interpreter.
- A person who is Deaf must wait for an interpreter in order to report an emergency.
- People who are Deaf should bring their own interpreter if they need one.
- Talking louder or reading to a person who is Deaf is an effective way to communicate.

## What information do I need to have available when requesting an interpreter?

- The dates and times needed.
- The duration.
- Name and address of the location.
- The name of the person who is Deaf.  
(A certified RID interpreter is bound by confidentiality.)
- The name and phone number of the person or agency responsible for payment.
- An authorization for billing.

Please be mindful that if a person who is Deaf is in need of emergency treatment call 911 immediately. If you are providing counseling, then you have the time to secure an interpreter. If you are offering training, you must provide an accommodation for an interpreter if requested.



NJ Department of Human Services  
Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services  
Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



# Working with people who are Deaf or hard of hearing in a treatment or prevention setting