



## STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

### USE OF A CERTIFIED DEAF INTERPRETER

RID encourages use of these papers for public distribution and advocacy.

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## USE OF A CERTIFIED DEAF INTERPRETER

### About the CDI

A Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) is an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing and has been certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf as an interpreter.

### Specialized training and/or experience

In addition to excellent general communication skills and general interpreter training, the CDI may also have specialized training and/or experience in use of gesture, mime, props, drawings and other tools to enhance communication. The CDI has an extensive knowledge and understanding of deafness, the deaf community, and/or Deaf culture which combined with excellent communication skills, can bring added expertise into both routine and uniquely difficult interpreting situations.

### Meeting special communication challenges

A Certified Deaf Interpreter may be needed when the communication mode of a deaf consumer is so unique that it cannot be adequately accessed by interpreters who are hearing. Some such situations may involve individuals who:

- use idiosyncratic non-standard signs or gestures such as those commonly referred to as “home signs” which are unique to a family
- use a foreign sign language
- have minimal or limited communication skills
- are deaf-blind or deaf with limited vision
- use signs particular to a given region, ethnic or age group
- have characteristics reflective of Deaf Culture not familiar to hearing interpreters.

### The CDI at Work

#### As a team member

Often a Certified Deaf Interpreter works as a team member with a certified interpreter who is hearing. In some situations, a CDI/hearing interpreter team can communicate more effectively than a hearing interpreter alone or a team of two hearing interpreters or a CDI alone. In the CDI/hearing interpreter team situation, the CDI transmits message content between a deaf consumer and a hearing interpreter; the hearing interpreter transmits message content between the CDI and a hearing consumer. While this process resembles a message relay, it is more than that. Each interpreter receives the message in one communication mode (or language), processes it linguistically and culturally, then passes it on in the appropriate communication mode. In even more challenging situations, the CDI and hearing interpreter may work together to understand a deaf individual's message, confer with each other to arrive at their best interpretation, then convey that interpretation to the hearing party.

#### For Deaf-Blind individuals

When a consumer who is deaf-blind is involved, the CDI may receive a speaker's message visually, then relay it to the deaf-blind individual through the sense of touch or at close visual range. This process is not a simple relay in which the CDI sees the signs and copies them for the person who is deaf-blind. The CDI processes the message, then transmits it in the mode most easily understood by the individual who is deaf-blind.

#### Solo

The CDI sometimes works as the sole interpreter in a situation. In these instances, the CDI may use sign language or other communication modes that are effective with a particular deaf individual; and may use, with the hearing consumer, a combination of speech, speech reading, residual hearing, and written communication.

#### On the platform

The CDI sometimes functions as interpreter before an audience. This may involve the CDI watching a hearing interpreter and restating the message to the audience in a different sign mode. At

other times, the CDI may be in front of the audience to “mirror” comments or questions from a signing member of the audience so that the rest of the audience can see them.

**Benefits** of using a Certified Deaf Interpreter are:

- optimal understanding by all parties
- efficient use of time and resources
- clarification of linguistic and/or cultural confusion and misunderstanding(s)
- arrival at a clear conclusion in the interpreting situation.

**The Association believes** that when use of a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) is appropriate, the CDI and a certified interpreter who is hearing can function as a highly effective team to provide quality communication access for everyone involved.