

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc., (RID) Standard Practice Paper (SPP) provides a framework of basic, respectable standards for RID members' professional work and conduct with consumers. This paper also provides specific information about the practice setting. This document is intended to raise awareness, educate, guide and encourage sound basic methods of professional practice. The SPP should be considered by members in arriving at an appropriate course of action with respect to their practice and professional conduct.

It is hoped that the standards will promote commitment to the pursuit of excellence in the practice of interpreting and be used for public distribution and advocacy.

About Mentoring

RID believes that the mentoring relationship is of benefit to consumers of interpreting services as well as to those in the interpreting profession. Each mentoring situation is unique depending upon the individuals involved and the goals of the relationship. Some mentoring relationships are formal arrangements that are arranged and managed by an agency, RID Affiliate Chapter, interpreter education program or other entity. Other mentoring relationships are private commitments between two individuals. These may include scheduled meetings and written goals or may simply involve an informal discussion of the interpreting work. Group mentoring may also occur. Common to all successful mentoring relationships is a mutual commitment to professional growth. There is no standard term used for the person seeking mentoring. For the sake of consistency, the term used throughout this document is "mentee."

What are the benefits of mentoring?

Consumers of interpreting services benefit from mentoring services because it increases the pool of interpreters skilled in specialized areas (such as medical or legal) and assists less experienced interpreters in developing a higher level of competency at a faster pace. In addition, many interpreters who provide mentoring report that they experience greater job satisfaction as a result. This may increase retention in the field, making more interpreters available for consumer needs.

Mentors benefit through direct involvement in the professional growth of interpreters. Being involved in a mentoring relationship may also provide inspiration for the mentor's own professional development through working with newer interpreters who may have more current theoretical knowledge. Mentoring can also provide interpreters with an opportunity to expand business options and earn continuing education credits (CEUs) through independent study programs.

The interpreting profession as a whole benefits from mentoring relationships by having more well-rounded professionals in the field and opportunities for collaboration between interpreters and Deaf community members. In addition, mentoring helps to develop supportive relationships among colleagues.

Individual interpreters benefit from mentoring by connecting with colleagues, broadening perspectives, being challenged and developing or strengthening skills and knowledge. When the relationship involves a more experienced interpreter working with a novice interpreter, the newer interpreter may experience a smoother entry into the interpreting field.

What does the mentoring relationship look like?

There are many approaches to mentoring. The mentor may serve as a coach or advisor, providing suggestions and information. The mentor may act as a sponsor, providing entree to the Deaf community and businesses that employ interpreters as well as valuable networking connections with other interpreters. The mentor may also provide encouragement and emotional support. It is important that mentors understand the limitations of the relationship and do not try to provide counseling.

What are the qualifications of a mentor?

A mentor can be a deaf or hearing person who has knowledge or experience that can be of benefit to the mentee. Mentors should be open, respectful, willing to risk mistakes and admit to them, interested in learning and sensitive to issues of power, culture and interpersonal dynamics. The mentor should have an understanding of adult learning theory, the mentoring process and culture and have the time to commit to the mentoring relationship. Depending upon the goal of the mentoring relationship, the mentor should have a working knowledge of American Sign Language (ASL); English; other languages, if relevant; interpreting methodologies; ethics; business practices; or other skills or knowledge salient to the mentoring relationship and the interpreting process. Local regulations or statutes may also stipulate qualifications of a mentor.

How are goals determined in a mentoring relationship?

The mentee, in consultation with the mentor, determines the goals for the mentoring relationship based on individual needs. The mentee may set long-term or short-term goals or both. These goals may be influenced by legislation or organizational policies. For example, a state or agency may require a certain level of certification for employment which may drive the goals of the mentoring relationship. Interpreters may also wish to develop skills in a specific setting. For example, an interpreter may wish to work in medical or legal settings and seek a mentor with experience in these areas who could assist in setting goals and subsequently determining appropriate activities and experiences to work toward those goals.

How is mentoring different than an internship?

Internship programs usually occur when an interpreter is still a student. Sometimes referred to as practicum programs, these are limited to a defined period of time when the interpreting student is under supervision. An intern usually observes experienced interpreters and may provide supervised interpreting services. Goals for an internship are established by the training program and may encompass many skill areas. Generally, an intern is evaluated by the training program and possibly by the internship site and must meet certain criteria in order to satisfactorily complete the internship.

Mentoring relationships may be sought by graduates of interpreter education programs, novices in the field and experienced interpreters. Mentoring allows an interpreter to target specific areas for improvement and to set goals in consultation with a mentor. Evaluation consists of reviewing progress and adjusting goals and is not based on a grading system to measure success. Mentors may or may not be present when mentees are providing interpreting services and generally do not function in a supervisory role.

Who pays for mentoring services?

Mentoring time may be paid by the mentee's employer, an agency or by the mentee. Some mentors barter their time in exchange for services or offer limited pro-bono services as a way of giving back to the profession. Mentoring time is often charged on an hourly basis but can be established as an arrangement for a block of time or per service. In some cases, mentoring is part of the regular duties of a salaried or hourly interpreter.

How can I contact a mentor?

Mentoring services are offered in a wide variety of contexts and programs. RID Affiliate Chapters, state commissions, educational institutions, interpreting agencies or independent mentoring businesses may provide or know about these services and be able to connect an interpreter with a mentor. The National Interpreter Education Center hosts Project TIEM.Online (Teaching Interpreting Educators and Mentors), which includes a list of "best resources in mentoring." (See resources section.)

How can I add mentoring to my business practice?

While a mentoring practice is rarely the primary income source for interpreters, many individual interpreters and agencies provide mentoring services in addition to providing other services. Interpreters who have formal training as a mentor are more likely to have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to provide effective services. Interpreters working as mentors should follow ethical business practice standards in providing service, setting rates and determining when to mentor and how to be compensated for these services.

How does mentoring apply to the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct?

Involvement in a mentoring relationship demonstrates a commitment to many of the principles of the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) for sign language interpreters. Tenet 7 of the CPC states that, "Interpreters engage in professional development." Mentoring falls within this domain. For all who are involved, it is a learning and growing experience that raises the level of professionalism for individual practitioners as well as the field as a whole. Additionally, a mentoring relationship that includes an agreement to keep what is shared confidential can provide an ethical framework for discussing the challenges faced in interpreting situations. While still respecting the rights of consumers, mentoring can allow interpreters an opportunity to discuss, with trusted colleagues, appropriate and effective choices to make in real-life settings. Finally, mentoring relationships strengthen collegial relationships and can contribute to a higher level of respect among colleagues.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

ICF International Coaching Federation

<http://www.coachfederation.org/ICF/>

Master Mentor Certificate Program

http://www.spcs.neu.edu/gradcert_interpret/

Regional Interpreter Education Center at Northeastern University

<http://www.asl.neu.edu/riec/resources.html#mentor>