

# MULTIPLE ROLES IN INTERPRETING

*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 Multiple Roles in Interpreting

Interpreters work in a variety of settings and situations; some are employees of institutions, agencies and companies, and some are self-employed. Interpreters who are self-employed are less likely to encounter situations in which non-interpreting duties are expected of them. Interpreters who are employed full-time by businesses, school districts, universities, government agencies, hospitals or mental health-care providers, for example, might perform other duties when not interpreting. These types of jobs may be referred to as multiple role jobs.

Examples of multiple role positions include but are not limited to:

- Nurse/Interpreter
- K-12 Educational Interpreter/Track Coach
- Job Coach/Interpreter
- Certified Deaf Interpreter/Interpreter Trainer
- University Student Advisor/Interpreter
- Interpreter Supervisor/Interpreter
- Company Interpreter/Sales Representative

Different job models are used depending on which duties are primary and which duties are secondary. Clearly outlining an employee's job duties is significant in terms of resolving potential role conflicts. One approach is to determine a percentage for each portion of the job; for example, 70 percent interpreting and 30 percent coaching.

In multiple role positions, conflicts can arise between the interpreting role and other job requirements. In general, the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) guides interpreters to avoid role conflicts, as exemplified by CPC tenet 3.3.: "Avoid performing dual or conflicting roles in multidisciplinary (e.g. educational or mental health teams) or other settings." The best time to deal with potential role conflicts is before they occur. When developing a job description for a multiple role position, consideration should be given to the interpreting responsibilities as well as any other employment requirements.

### Developing multiple role positions

When developing and implementing a multiple role position with interpreting responsibilities, best practices include:

- requiring interpreter certification and appropriate education and training
- providing professional development opportunities
- developing a pay formula that considers the multiple roles and compensates the employee for having dual skills
- defining confidentiality boundaries for both the interpreting role and other required roles, in a variety of situations
- recognizing the interpreter's need to limit the number of hours spent physically interpreting, especially if the interpreter works alone
- specifying the amount of time expected for interpreting versus other job duties, noting whether interpreting is a primary or secondary duty
- determining a process to use when role conflicts do arise, so they can be resolved effectively
- considering hiring outside interpreters to cover sensitive meetings, such as, personnel reviews, reprimands or grievance procedures, that might be a conflict-of-interest for staff interpreters

When functioning in a multiple role job with interpreting named as the primary role, interpreters generally do not:

- reveal, report or use confidential information obtained while interpreting
- perform the interpreter role and another role simultaneously
- interpret beyond their competency level
- routinely perform tasks that might exacerbate physical problems sometimes associated with interpreting
- interpret for long periods of time without relief
- perform other duties when needed for interpreting

When interpreting is not named as a primary role, conflicts can still occur. To respect consumers' rights and confidentiality, great care must be taken to inform all parties:

- of the role in which the person is functioning
- of the possible future use of the information gained in that situation
- that there may be legal mandates that override the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct

### Interpreter credentials

Employers of interpreters can verify interpreter competency. An appropriate indicator of an interpreter's level of competence is the interpreter's credentials. The most reliable credentials in the United States are those established by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID).

## NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct

The NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct is the foundation of the interpreting profession. Every employer of interpreters should become familiar with this document as it will have significant influence in the development of multiple role positions.

RID believes that through multiple role positions, interpreters can be placed in many settings in which the hiring of a full-time interpreter would not otherwise be feasible or justifiable. By developing a multiple role position, the hiring entity benefits by having an employee with dual skills. RID believes that knowing the potential issues regarding multiple roles and having a plan in place to resolve conflicts is crucial to the success of such positions. Planning for possible challenges avoids compromising accessibility for all involved parties.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct

[www.rid.org](http://www.rid.org)

Explanation of NAD/RID Certification Credentials

[www.rid.org](http://www.rid.org)