

Sign Language Interpreting in Legal Settings

Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind, and Late-Deafened Consumers:

If you need to go to court, whether for a traffic ticket, as a witness in a case, as the parent of a minor involved in a case, or for any other reason, you may need interpreters for full communication access to the legal process. This can also be for outside a courtroom, for a deposition, investigation, or even at a police station. For any legal interpreting situation, it is very important that the interpreter is qualified to do the job. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act – the ADA – a **qualified interpreter** is “an interpreter who is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially both receptively and expressively, using any specialized vocabulary necessary for effective communication.” See ADA Part 36.104 for this definition: <http://www.ada.gov/reg3a.html#Anchor-36104>

You have the right to communication access for legal situations.

For more information about your rights to qualified interpreters in a legal setting, visit the ADA Home page <http://www.ada.gov> or the National Association of the Deaf website: www.nad.org You can also visit the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) site to read the Standard Practice Paper on Legal Interpreting: http://www.rid.org/UserFiles/File/pdfs/Standard_Practice_Papers/Drafts_June_2006/Legal_Interpreting_SPP.pdf

Judges, Court Personnel, Lawyers, Law Enforcement, and other professionals in the legal field:

If a Deaf, hard of hearing, Deaf Blind, or late-deafened person is to appear in your court, you may need interpreters to ensure full communication access to the legal process. This could also be for taking a deposition, conducting an investigation, meeting with a minor’s parent or guardian, or questioning a witness or suspect in a case, to name a few examples. It is of utmost importance that your interpreters are qualified to work in a legal setting. Additional specialized training and mentored experience are examples of how an interpreter already qualified for other settings prepares to work in the legal interpreting field. In many cases, your specific need for interpreters does not justify hiring full-time staff interpreters. Working with an experienced interpreting services provider to obtain services on an as-needed basis can help to make your communication accessibility a reasonable task.

Interpreters accept assignments based on their varied skill sets, depending on the type of interpreting needed: sign language is appropriate with many who are Deaf or hard of hearing, tactile or close vision communication with many who are Deaf Blind, and oral transliteration with many who are late-deafened. In addition, a qualified **Deaf Interpreter** may be needed in situations involving children, or with someone who has limited formal language, limited cognitive function, or is from another country.

A member of your staff or court personnel who knows some sign language or a defendant’s family member who offers to interpret can compromise the communication process with errors, omissions, or bias. Interpreters’ qualifications can be challenged during the course of a proceeding, and an appeal of a case decision can be made based on questioning the qualifications of the interpreters.

When you need sign language, tactile, or oral interpreters for full communication, work with qualified interpreters to protect the record, your case, or your investigation.

For more information on legal interpreting, including the interpreter as an officer of the court, and the interpreter’s requirement to preview the case file:

See the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Standard Practice Paper on Legal Interpreting: http://www.rid.org/UserFiles/File/pdfs/Standard_Practice_Papers/Drafts_June_2006/Legal_Interpreting_SPP.pdf

For more information on the need for a Deaf Interpreter:

See the Standard Practice Paper published by RID:

http://www.rid.org/UserFiles/File/pdfs/Standard_Practice_Papers/CDISPP.pdf

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SCHEDULE A QUALIFIED INTERPRETER, **CONTACT SLIS.**
CALL **770-531-0700** (VOICE) OR EMAIL requests@slisinc.com