

ACCESSIBILITY
DEAF PEOPLE &
INTERPRETING SERVICES

Developed by the Ontario Association of the Deaf
&
the Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters

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Human Rights legislation protect members of society from discrimination in employment, accommodation, services and facilities.

However, language barriers and discriminatory attitudes have served to deny Deaf people adequate access in all sectors of society including health care, legal proceedings, education, training and politics. As a result, Deaf people have sometimes experienced a compromised quality of life. In recent years our judicial system has affirmed, through the Supreme Court of Canada, the rights of Deaf people to be provided with professional interpreting services to facilitate their participation in various situations.

In 2001 the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) was passed by the Ontario provincial government. The act requires the provincial and municipal governments as well as organizations that receive provincial funding such as schools, universities and hospitals to review their policies and programs and to develop accessibility plans that address existing barriers and prevent new barriers from being established.

In 2005 the Ontario government, recognizing the historical discrimination against persons who have disabilities or who are Deaf, passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the purpose of which is to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for people with disabilities and for people who are Deaf.

Interpreting services are an essential means to bridge the linguistic and cultural divide between Deaf people and society at large. Providing access may call for the use of technologies (such as captioning services) in addition to contracting interpreters. Diversity within the Deaf community leads to the need for flexibility and respect for individual preferences when arranging services.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Ontario Association of the Deaf (OAD) and the Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters (OASLI) serve all persons regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, age, gender, education, disability or deafness in accordance with provincial and federal laws.

DEAF CULTURE

Culture can be defined as a way of life. It is a learned pattern of behaviour, a way of acting, thinking and feeling. Culture includes language, norms, values, traditions and rules of behaviour. Deaf culture incorporates all these elements and it is for this reason that Deaf people form a linguistic and cultural minority.

Although deafness is often viewed as a disability, many Deaf people identify themselves as culturally Deaf, indicating that their view of deafness is not one of disability but rather of pride in community and language.

Being part of a cultural group brings with it a social network and a sense of belonging. American Sign Language (ASL) is highly valued. The ability to express oneself freely and to be understood more completely through ASL has given rise to a vibrant Deaf community. Members of the Deaf community share certain values, beliefs and experiences. Deaf people tend to demonstrate particular behavioural norms and enjoy their traditions and rich history. Within the Deaf community there are many opportunities to socialize, engage in sports, explore creative expression, and so on.

INTERPRETER ASSOCIATIONS

FIT

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Montréal, Québec H3A 2S9
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AVLIC

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CTTIC

Name: Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council
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DEAF ASSOCIATIONS

WFD

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CCSD

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OCSD

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AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

American Sign Language (ASL) is a visual language. It is a linguistically complete and natural language capable of conveying both concrete and abstract ideas. ASL has its own vocabulary, grammatical and structural rules. ASL uses signs, space and facial expressions as functions of language.

Sign languages are specific to their communities and are therefore not universal. ASL is considered the first language of many Deaf people in Canada and the United States. It is through ASL that the Deaf community shares experiences, stories, poetry, humour, etc.

ASL emerged in Colonial America, notably on Martha's Vineyard where there was once a high concentration of Deaf people. In 1817, Laurent Clerc, the first Deaf teacher in the United States, came from Paris, France, to Hartford, Connecticut. Clerc and American, Thomas Gallaudet, worked together to establish the first school for Deaf students.

Students from various areas of the United States attended this residential school and it was here that French Sign Language was used with the students alongside signs that they had learned in their home communities. This educational environment drew Deaf people together and led to the standardization of early American Sign Language. Over time the language continued to evolve into modern American Sign Language. The folklore, history, arts and cultural values of Deaf people are expressed and preserved through ASL.

In Canada, there are two commonly used sign languages: American Sign Language (ASL) which is used in Anglophone communities and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) which is used in Francophone communities.

There is also Maritime Sign Language (MSL). Unfortunately, its usage is on the decline and ASL and LSQ remain relatively dominant in the Canadian Deaf community.

Tips for Communicating with Deaf People

- face the Deaf person
- tap the Deaf person on the shoulder to get his/her attention

- ensure the environment is well lit
- be prepared to communicate in writing
- approach the Deaf person and get his/her attention before you speak to them
- open-ended questions may be used to make sure information has been properly conveyed
- speak normally
- looking away mid-conversation is disruptive; maintain eye contact
- keep your hands and objects away from your mouth
- rephrase misunderstood questions or comments
- eliminate background noises if possible

Keep in mind that Deaf people are part of a linguistic and cultural minority. Be sure to ask them how they would prefer to communicate with you. Remember that there is no need to shout or raise your voice. It would not be helpful to use over-emphasized mouth movements or exaggerated mime.

COMMUNICATING THROUGH INTERPRETERS

Communicating with a Deaf person through the services of an interpreter is not an everyday occurrence for most people. Professional sign language interpreters are equipped with techniques to make the experience of working with interpreters a seamless and effective process. Using interpreters allows information to be communicated without errors or misunderstandings. Most people begin to feel comfortable communicating through an interpreter after only a few minutes. Learning how to make effective use of interpreting services is quite simple.

The Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters

(OASLI) is the main professional association of ASL-English interpreters in Ontario. It is an affiliate chapter of the

Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada

(AVLIC). OASLI members work alongside Deaf individuals and organizations to improve the quality of interpretation services through promoting the use of professional interpreting services.

Key objectives include:

- providing interpreters with professional development and networking opportunities
- offering venues for interpreters to share best practices, discuss trend and issues in the field
- expecting members to uphold the standards set by the AVLIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct
- acting in an advisory capacity to service providers, agencies and interpreter training programmes
- raising awareness about the field of interpreting through public education
- answering questions and addressing concerns raised by people using interpreting services

A volunteer board of directors, responsible for the administration and governance of the association, is elected annually by the membership. While OASLI is not a referral agency, a directory is published each year to provide information for contacting interpreters.

OASLI's mission is to provide support and professional development as well as to promote ethical and professional behaviour among its members; to advocate for professional recognition and to provide public education about the role of Sign Language Interpreters.

OAD

The Ontario Association of the Deaf (OAD) was founded by two Deaf teachers who taught at the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf in Belleville in 1866. OAD is the oldest Deaf consumer organization in Canada and is currently an affiliate of the Canadian Association of the Deaf. OAD is a non-profit organization that relies on public donations and government funding to provide and maintain services to the community.

Originally founded as a social club, OAD is now a leading political/advocacy organization. Some of OAD's initiatives include:

- Consultation and Training
- Consumer Advocacy (Children and Adults)
- Access Advocacy
- Deaf Outreach Program, Prevention and Advocacy for Deaf People Living with HIV/AIDS
- Deaf Youth Leadership Camp
- Mayfest (Annual Community Festival)
- Accessible Legal Aid Clinic
- Women's Issues

COMMUNICATING THROUGH INTERPRETERS CONT'D

It is important to note that interpreters do not participate when they are working. Their role is to facilitate communication between the Deaf person and the person who does not know sign language. Direct your comments to the Deaf person and not the interpreter. Engaging the interpreter in conversation hampers the flow of communication and can cause confusion. Questions or comments may be discussed with the interpreter before or after the appointment or during breaks.

In directing comments or questions to the Deaf person be sure to avoid referring to him/her in the third person. For instance, there is no need to say "please ask him/her if they have had a chance to review the material I sent him/her." Instead, ask the question directly: "have you had a chance to review the material I sent you?" Similarly, when the Deaf person is signing, although you will hear the voice of the interpreter, all of the comments and questions are coming directly from the Deaf person.

Occasionally, the interpreter may interrupt the speaker or signer to ask for clarification. If this happens, try to repeat or rephrase what you have said.

When speaking to a Deaf person, remember to look at him/her rather than at the interpreter. The Deaf person's eye gaze may be on the interpreter because they are watching the interpreter in order to understand what you are saying. However, the Deaf person will also look at you to gauge mood, tone, etc. from facial expression and body language.

Remember interpreters are facilitating communication between two distinct languages and cultures. This process involves listening to the speaker, understanding the message, interpreting its meaning and then finally, reproducing that message in another language. Therefore, you should be aware that interpreters follow between 5-20 seconds behind the speaker.

Please refer to our quality assurance protocols on page 9 for more information on working with interpreters.

If you are at all concerned about working with an interpreter, try to meet with the interpreter 5-10 minutes before the appointment to ask questions or seek clarity on the process.

ETHICAL PRACTICE AND CONDUCT

The AVLLIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct outlines values that members are expected to uphold:

- professional accountability
- professional competence
- non-discrimination
- integrity in professional relationships
- integrity in business practices

The AVLLIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct emphasizes the need for interpreters to use good judgment in all aspects of their service; working within one's abilities, avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest, keeping confidential all information accessed in the course of their work, and so on. It is expected that all interpreters are committed to on-going professional development and, in turn, accurately represent their credentials when promoting themselves.

AVLLIC also has a Dispute Resolution process that provides a consistent and formal standard for the filing of complaints related to the AVLLIC Code of Ethics & Guidelines for Professional Conduct. Only members of AVLLIC are subject to this process.

To view a complete version of the AVLLIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct and/or Dispute Resolution process, visit the AVLLIC website at www.avlic.ca

ACCREDITATION CONT'D

MAG

The Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) offers a one-day orientation session including a brief written test to those who wish to be registered with it. Interpreters who successfully pass this process are MAG-accredited. These interpreters have MAG Photo Identification which should be shown when providing service in the courts of Ontario. Ministries that govern the courts of other provinces offer similar accreditations for ASL-English Interpreters working within their jurisdictions.

PWGSC (formerly SS)

Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) formerly known as Secretary of State (SS), screens ASL-English interpreters who wish to work in federal government venues. Passing both a written test and a video-taped skill screening makes interpreters eligible to participate in the tendering process. Interpreters who pass this process are referred to as Registered Linguistic Service Suppliers and are eligible to submit bids to the Translation Bureau. The Translation Bureau also coordinates interpreting services for employees of the federal government.

AIEP

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities funds two full-time ASL-English Interpreter Training Programmes (AIEP) in Ontario. These programmes are currently located at George Brown College in Toronto and St. Clair College in Windsor. While the programmes at Sheridan College in Brampton and Cambrian College in Sudbury are no longer in operation, these diplomas are recognized on par with those of the current programmes.

Other AIEPs in Canada have included Douglas College in British Columbia, Grant MacEwan Community College in Alberta, Red River College in Manitoba and Nova Scotia Community College in Halifax. Diplomas received upon successful completion of these programmes are recognized across the country.

ACCREDITATION

OAD and OASLI recognize several tests and screenings that are available to ASL-English Interpreters. Upon successful completion of the various requirements, interpreters are able to promote themselves with the following designations:

AVLIC COI

The Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC) is the national professional association for sign language interpreters and the only certifying body in Canada. The Certificate of Interpretation (COI) is awarded to interpreters who successfully complete AVLIC's four-phased evaluation system. Phase one consists of the Written Test of Knowledge (WTK); phase two consists of two preparation workshops; phase three is the Test of Interpretation (TOI); and phase four is the Certificate Maintenance Program.

In Canada, only practitioners who hold the AVLIC COI are entitled to refer to themselves as Certified Interpreters.

Active membership with AVLIC and OASLI (or other affiliate chapters) is a condition of certification maintenance. Active membership entails signing a declaration to adhere to the AVLIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct. The AVLIC COI is the only credential that is acknowledged by all provinces in Canada.

Some ASL-English Interpreters working in Canada hold certification granted by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), the U.S national professional association of interpreters.

OIS

Ontario Interpreting Services (OIS) is one of the core programs offered by The Canadian Hearing Society. OIS brokers the services of ASL-English Interpreters on a fee-for-service basis. Interpreters who wish to be employed by the agency or added to its referral list must pass the OIS registration process which consists of a video-taped skills screening and panel interview. Interpreters who are successful in this process are referred to as OIS Registered.

SECURING INTERPRETING SERVICES

There is no legislative body regulating interpreters' scope of practice. OASLI recommends that all parties involved in an interpreted event share responsibility for safeguarding quality. There are a number of factors which can be considered to assist in securing the most suitable interpreter for the appointment.

Feel free to ask the interpreter for the following information:

- interpreter training programme diploma
- professional memberships (OASLI, AVLIC, etc.)
- accreditation
- years of experience
- areas of experience/expertise
- comfort and familiarity with the nature and format of appointment
- willingness to travel

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the nature of the appointment availability of adequate preparation materials identities of the individuals involved composition of the interpreting team the need for related professionals; Deaf Interpreter, Deaf Advocate <p>The following terms will need to be confirmed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> date, time and location of appointment fees (rate per hour/half day/day) based on the amount of service needed 		<p>finger spelling, Braille and large print notes. Access to interpretation services allows a Deaf-Blind person to enjoy independence and a higher quality of life.</p> <p>For more information, visit the Canadian National Institute for the Blind website at www.cnib.ca</p> <p>Oral Interpreter</p> <p>The services of an Oral Interpreter are used by Deaf people who prefer to use spoken language and speech-reading to communicate. This service entails far more than simply mouthing the words of the speaker for the speech-reader to watch. Difficult-to-discern aspects of spoken language are interpreted to the Deaf person in a structure and vocabulary that is highly visible on the lips.</p> <p>For more information, visit the Alexander Graham Bell Association website at www.agbell.org.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> payment for time preparing for the appointment payment of travel expenses/travel time cancellation policy <p>In some circumstances it may be useful to have a signed service agreement outlining the mutually agreed upon terms. In other circumstances emails clearly laying out terms prior to confirming the booking may be regarded as sufficient.</p> <p>Many interpreters work as independent contractors. For this reason there are variations among business practices.</p>		<p>Please Note: OASLI does not offer membership to individuals practicing under the title Deaf-Blind Interpreter or Oral Interpreter. For more information on these services, please contact the relevant organizations or individual interpreters.</p>

FIELDS OF PRACTICE

Sign Language Interpreter

An interpreter bridges communication when people do not share a common language. The interpretation process is based on both cultural and linguistic knowledge. In Ontario, Sign Language Interpreters provide interpretation between English and American Sign Language (ASL) or, in several communities, between French and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ). Sign Language Interpreters are

professionals who subscribe to a rigorous ethical code that stresses confidentiality, impartiality and integrity. The interpreter does not counsel, advise or interject opinions while working.

Deaf Interpreter

Certain situations require more specialized services than Sign Language Interpreters are equipped to provide. Some individuals, such as Deaf people from countries where ASL is not used, young children, and those who have mental health conditions that affect language use, will have unique communication needs. In these and other circumstances a Deaf Interpreter (DI) will prove invaluable in ensuring that communication is successful.

A DI is a Deaf native user of ASL and/or LSQ who has been trained and is qualified to work as an interpreter. Deaf Interpreters usually work in conjunction with Sign Language Interpreters.

Here is an illustration of the teamwork involved in a Sign Language Interpreter and a Deaf Interpreter team when working to ensure clear communication. A spoken message is interpreted by the Sign Language Interpreter into ASL. The DI watches and then interprets the same message, this time enriched with further dimensions of culture and language. The Deaf person then responds by signing. The DI interprets this message into standard ASL. The Sign Language Interpreter watches this and then conveys this message in spoken language. In this manner the two interpreters work together to relay information effectively.

MAINTAINING QUALITY SERVICE

Interpreting services should be in place. Providing straight-forward arrangements should be in place. Providing conditions that facilitate the work of the interpreter will ensure smooth, seamless communication with all parties. Through arrangements such as these you can protect the calibre of service and make responsible use of interpreters.

Physical Set-Up

The room should be arranged so that the Deaf person has a clear view of the interpreter. It is usually preferable to have the interpreter placed near the main speaker so that the Deaf person can easily see both the speaker and interpreter. In general, the interpreter should be positioned in front of a plain background. It is also advisable to check with the Deaf person for any preferences relating to seating arrangements.

Audio-Visual Equipment

When using audio-visual systems, take some time to think about the physical placement of interpreters during the event. Take into consideration that the interpreter will be standing near the front of the room. The interpreter will need to be able to hear clearly but should not be positioned directly in front of large speakers. The interpreter should also be able to see/glance at overhead projection as the lecturer will refer to its content.

Lighting

Lighting must be sufficient so that the Deaf participants can easily view the interpreter. Be sure to check with the Deaf person if you plan to dim or change the lights.

Preparation Material

Providing interpreters with sufficient information related to the appointment in advance is extremely beneficial. This not only guarantees that the interpreter has adequate time to prepare for the event but also ensures that the information is conveyed clearly without misunderstandings. It also prevents frequent interruptions by the interpreter. Also, when explaining the particulars of an appointment with the interpreter, remember to be as detailed as possible. This ensures that the interpreter will be fully prepared, meet you in the right place and be ready to work.

MAINTAINING QUALITY SERVICE CONT'D

Team of Interpreters

For some appointments or events, securing a team of interpreters may be required. Typically, assignments that are longer than two hours require more than one interpreter. If material is technical, fast-paced, complex, or involves numerous individuals participating in rapid discussions, two or more interpreters may be required for appointments under two hours.

Be sure to talk with the interpreter(s) prior to the event or appointment to ensure that an adequate team of interpreters is secured.

Breaks

Breaks should be scheduled regularly. Depending on the nature of the appointment, several breaks may be required. The frequency and duration of breaks depend on the length of the appointment, the type of content being discussed, how many interpreters have been contracted, etc. Check with the interpreter(s) prior to the assignment to negotiate when breaks will be taken and how long they will last.

Pace

For group discussions, it is important that participants speak one at a time. The interpreter can interpret for only one person at a time. Try to remind participants that they should not talk over top of one another but should instead turn take ensuring that everyone's comments are adequately interpreted.

INTERPRETER WELL-BEING

In most areas of Ontario there is currently a shortage of qualified interpreters. The risk of potentially career-ending injury increases when interpreters work in adverse conditions such as under stress or when fatigued.

Interpreting is a mentally, physically and emotionally demanding process. An interpreter's well-being is essential to maintaining an optimal level of service for the duration of an event.

Musculoskeletal Injury (MSI), otherwise known as Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), refers to a collection of injuries or medical conditions which occur as a result of a repetitive task without adequate rest and recovery intervals. The most prevalent injuries among ASL-English Interpreters include: Tendonitis, Bursitis.

Injuries are of great concern to ASL-English Interpreters due to the demands inherent in their work. It is in the best interest of those who use interpreting services to support interpreters' efforts to avoid injury by working with interpreters to determine the best approach to dealing with various obstacles.

If there are unavoidable conditions which may hinder the interpretation process these should be discussed with interpreters at the time of securing service. Special preparation is necessary for interpreters who choose to accept work that requires dealing with challenging circumstances.