

**A “Crash Course”  
In Working with a Sign Language Interpreter  
(Educational Interpreter-EI)**

- The **sole** function of the educational interpreter (EI) is to facilitate communication between Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Hearing individuals. It is the EI’s job and responsibility to a) interpret everything he/she hears to the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student via sign language and b) to communicate anything the student wishes to convey using the EI’s voice. The EI may not edit, delete, or otherwise change the message being conveyed. Never ask the EI not to interpret something.
- Because of the unique communication situation and the fact that the EI and the student are often in close physical proximity, it is often assumed that the EI is monitoring the student’s work/behavior, or is the responsible for the student. This is not the case. The student is the teacher’s responsibility just like the rest of the students in the classroom.
- Providing a Deaf/Hard of Hearing student with an EI does NOT give him/her the same access to the educational experience that hearing students have.
- When addressing the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student, speak directly to him/her. The EI will sign what you are saying, “read” the student’s response, and then use his/her voice to relay that information to you.
- It is important to remember that while interpreting the EI must be a sentence or two behind you. Consequently, the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student’s response will be somewhat delayed. This is particularly noticeable during the classroom discussions—Q and A, etc. The process should be slowed or slightly modified so that the student has the opportunity to participate as fully as possible.
- It will be necessary for the EI to stand near the teacher (or any person speaking), as well as move around the classroom so that the student is able to see the EI, the speaker, and/or visual aid simultaneously.
- The student requires seating that affords him/her visual access of the EI and the teacher. Good lighting is important. Backlit situations hinder visual access.
- The student is unable to watch the EI and the teacher, video, etc while simultaneously taking notes. An assigned note taker (student) is often used to alleviate this challenge. Try not to speak with your back turned to the student.
- Closed-captioned media is essential. If at all possible, try to use captioned on DVD’s or any other media for class viewing. If it is not possible, please loan the DVD or media that will be used, to the EI so he/she can preview the tape before it is to be used in the classroom. The library has a catalog of captioned material that may be borrowed. The television you use must have closed-caption capability; make sure all these things are checked prior to the date it is to be shown.

- The Deaf/Hard of Hearing student in your class will have a resource teacher who is trained in the education of Deaf/Hard or Hearing students. He/she is your best resource for educational issues that may arise.
- EI's are bound by a Code of Professional Conduct, which is attached. The EI is not able to discuss the student or anything that happens during the interpreting process with you, or anyone, including parents. The EI may contribute input on issues of communication and cultural awareness. This sort of input must be handled during a time with the EI is not in interpreting mode. The most opportune time is during the IEP meeting. Interpreters should always be invited to the IEP meetings as they are a part of the IEP team as a service provider.
- If you have questions about the student—ask him or her directly.
- Some, but not all, Deaf/Hard of Hearing students “read lips.” Research has shown that lip reading is only 30% effective.

This document serves as a starting point to assist your awareness in working with and EI. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to ask your classroom EI.

### **Code of Professional Conduct**

*A code of professional conduct is a necessary component to any profession to maintain standards for the individuals within that profession to adhere. It brings about accountability, responsibility and trust to the individuals that the profession serves.*

RID, along with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), co-authored the ethical code of conduct for interpreters. Both organizations uphold high standards of professionalism and ethical conduct for interpreters. At the core of this code of conduct are the seven tenets, which are followed by guiding principles and illustrations.

The tenets are to be viewed holistically and as a guide to complete professional behavior. When in doubt, one should refer to the explicit language of the tenet.

#### **TENETS**

1. Interpreters adhere to standards of confidential communication.
2. Interpreters possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the specific interpreting situation.
3. Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation.
4. Interpreters demonstrate respect for consumers.
5. Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns, and students of the profession.
6. Interpreters maintain ethical business practices.
7. Interpreters engage in professional development.

**Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.**  
**333 Commerce Street, Alexandria, VA 22314**  
**(703) 838-0030**