



WHAT IS A SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER?

A sign language interpreter must accurately convey messages between two different languages. An interpreter is there for both deaf and hearing individuals. The act of interpreting occurs when a hearing person speaks, and an interpreter renders the speaker's meaning into sign language, or other forms used by the deaf party/ies. The interpreting also happens in reverse: when a deaf person signs, an interpreter renders the meaning expressed in the signs into the oral language for the hearing party, which is sometimes referred to as voice interpreting or *voicing*. This may be performed either as simultaneous or consecutive interpreting. Skilled sign language interpreters will position themselves in a room or space that allows them to be seen by the deaf participants and heard clearly by hearing participants, as well as be in a position to hear and/or see the speaker or speakers clearly. In some circumstances, an interpreter may interpret from one language to another whether that is English to American Sign Language, French to English to American Sign Language and so on.

Deaf individuals also have the opportunity to work as interpreters. If they are certified they are referred to as a CDI (Certified Deaf Interpreter), if not they would be called a DI (Deaf Interpreter). The Deaf individual will team with a hearing counterpart to provide interpretation for deaf individuals who may not know the same sign language used in that country, who have minimal language skills, are developmentally delayed, have other mental and/or physical disabilities which make communication a unique challenge, or request one. In other cases, the hearing interpreter may interpret in the sign language, whichever kind of sign language the team knows, and the deaf team will then interpret into the language in which the individual can understand. They also interpret information from one medium of language into another – for example, when a person is signing visually, the deaf interpreter could be hired to copy those signs into a deaf-blind person's hand and add visual information.

ASL interpreters have been formally trained in an Interpreter Training Program (ITP). ITP lengths vary, and are usually two or four years to obtain a degree or certificate.

Interpreters in Alberta are required to maintain active membership in their professional association. All interpreters adhere to a professional Code of Ethics which requires that they protect confidentiality and demonstrate the highest professional standard of practice.

Interpreters are provided on a fee-for-service basis. Fees are typically not charged to the Deaf individual. They are typically charge to the business, organization or government that is providing the communication access to their services such as medical, legal, counselling, education and so on.

See our website for Interpreter Booking.