

# Tips For Working With a Sign Language Interpreter

- Call the interpreter to schedule the appointment. If possible, meet beforehand so you have the opportunity to exchange any necessary information.
- There may be the need to clarify unique vocabulary, technical terms, acronyms, and/or jargon. Provide interpreter with any written materials ahead of time. Give copies to the interpreters well in advance so they will be able to review vocabulary and become familiar with the information, as they will be unable to look at the handout and interpret at the same time.
- Allow the interpreter and deaf consumer to guide you in setting up the room to maximize communication as it pertains to the seating arrangements, lighting and other needs.
- Speak naturally at your normal pace. The interpreter will ask you to slow down or repeat if necessary. During the interpreting process, we listen for concepts and ideas, not just words, to render an accurate interpretation. There may be the need to allow for extra time as your comments are interpreted, and responses will be slightly delayed due to the process.
- Say only those things that you want to be interpreted. The interpreter ethically must interpret everything they hear.
- Maintain eye contact with the deaf consumer. The interpreter is there to facilitate the communication between yourself and the consumer. Avoid directing comments to the interpreter (i.e. “Tell him...” or “Ask him...”), and respond directly to the deaf consumer.
- Allowing only one person to speak at one time will reduce confusion and/or lost information. An interpreter can only accommodate one speaker at a time. It would be beneficial to encourage the group to follow this rule by pausing before recognizing the next speaker to allow the interpreter to finish with the current speaker.
- Please ask any questions regarding the deaf consumer to the deaf consumer directly. The interpreter is bound by a code of confidentiality and cannot repeat any information they may have learned on previous interpreting assignments.
- In the event that you are showing a video, every effort should be made to ensure that it is closed-captioned.
- Most importantly, relax and enjoy the process! Using an interpreter is not meant to be difficult or overwhelming! If there’s something you are unsure of, just ask.

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