

Tips for Working with Interpreters & Captioners

Speak directly to the deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind individual

- Address the person directly rather than directing comments to the interpreter/captioner (e.g. “How are you today?”)
- The interpreter/captioner will interpret in the first person for the deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind individual (e.g. “I was wondering if you could help me.”)
- If the interpreter/captioner is speaking as the interpreter, they will say something like, “The interpreter couldn’t hear the question. Could you please repeat it?”
- Maintain eye contact with the deaf individual even though they will be looking at the interpreter or captioner’s screen

Speak naturally and at a normal pace

- To provide an accurate interpretation, interpreters are listening for concepts, ideas, affect, and intent, not just words
- Please ask that only one person speaks at a time
- Interpreters/captioners will ask you to slow down or repeat information if/when necessary

Please provide the interpreter/captioner with:

- Agendas, outlines, handouts, or summaries
- Information on unique vocabulary such as acronyms and/or technical terms
- Seating arrangements that provide the deaf client with a line of sight to the speaker and any presentation material that will be used while ensuring foot traffic in front of the interpreter is kept to a minimum
- Sufficient lighting for the interpreter to be seen

Interpreting and captioning is physically and cognitively demanding

- Assignments of an hour or more in length that are technical in nature, continuous, or emotionally intense may require a team of interpreters. Teaming helps protect the integrity of the message and protects the occupational safety of the interpreter/captioner.

Interpreters/Captioners follow a strict Code of Professional Conduct

- Interpreters/captioners are to remain impartial and keep all assignment related information confidential
- Avoid asking the interpreter/captioner for opinions or information about the deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind individual.
- Do not ask the interpreter/captioner to censor any portion of the conversation