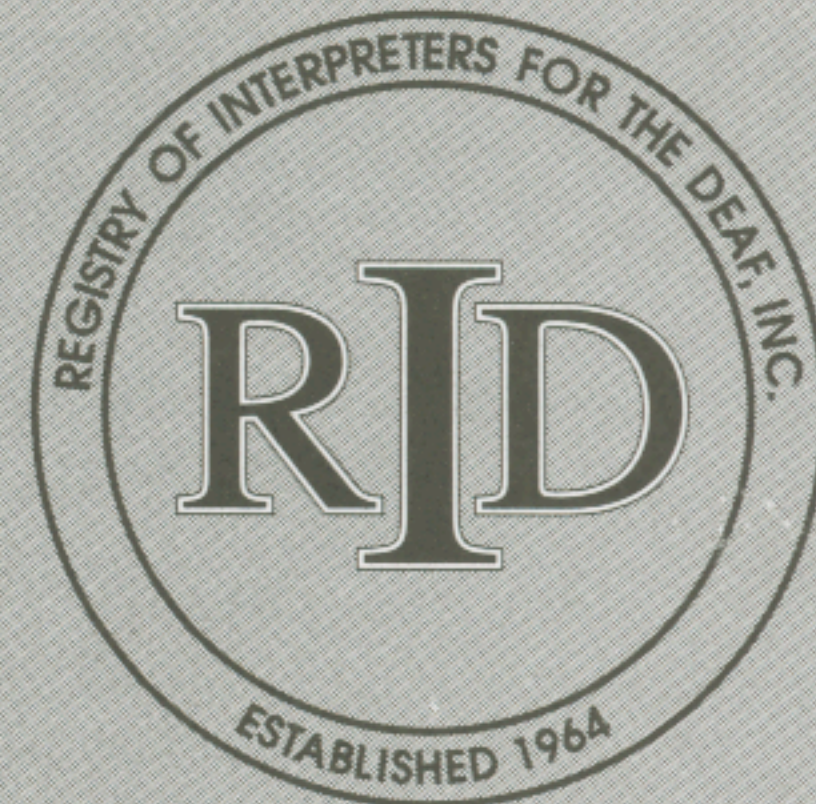


VIEWS



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"Certified Deaf Interpreter—WHY?"

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Please read this article with an open mind. The intention of this article is to introduce a different strategy for how to use Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDI). This article does not mean to offend hearing interpreters, or to insult deaf interpreters that have the Reverse Skills Certificate (RSC). It will give different perspectives for both hearing and deaf interpreters to think about. It will explain the concept and the processing of what a Certified Deaf Interpreter's role should be. I will use the process of interpreting (going from sign language to target language, keeping integrity of message and equivalency of message while maintaining neutrality and following the Code of Ethics) and linguistic study of American Sign Language as several examples.

Historically, hearing interpreters have been accustomed to using deaf interpreters with the RSC. Some RSC holders have the proper training. However, some of them did not have any training. Thus, it is a risky situation for the hearing interpreters who work with poorly trained teammates. Most of the RSC holders received training to become raters/evaluate hearing interpreters.

Now there is more training available for deaf interpreters. More deaf interpreters have applied for the CDI-P with an enthusiastic outlook for this professionalism. There is not much work for them, but they have pursued more work. They have been trying to convince hearing consumers and hearing interpreters that they are capable of doing the work. We know this is a new concept to some people, and the financial impact is another matter. Deaf interpreters feel as if they are shut off from the opportunity to gain experience as deaf interpreters. The only job they

can seek to secure their bread and butter is to teach at interpreter training programs.

"Oh, Certified Deaf Interpreters are there only for deaf people with minimal language skills or whenever I need them!" many hearing interpreter may say. However, the hearing interpreters have completely forgotten about the grassroots population. What about the deaf children, deaf mental health patients and deaf patients in hospital emergency rooms? Deaf/hearing teams are very useful with those who have very strong American Sign Language skills. Many of us are not aware of or know the other possible sequences to make the communication more efficient, and success in message relaying system.

Because it is a new field, we know misunderstandings occur. We were not thoroughly acquainted with how to use deaf interpreters in the past. While the concept is not new, many are not familiar with it. There are few printed materials about deaf/hearing teams. The topic has not been included in most interpreter training programs. If we have the information and include it in the training programs, we will have a different perspective and different feelings/attitude about it.

Deaf interpreter, how, when and where to use them

For most hearing interpreters, they would envision the following: "I can sign very well and I can understand them very well, so there is a no need for deaf interpreter to be present." Or some of them feel demoted to have a certified deaf interpreter working with them. Or some feel intimidat-

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ed, or even feel downgraded and or insulted. These feelings are understandable. They would not have those unnecessary feelings, however, if they did have proper training that would give them a different perspective and proper knowledge of how to use Certified Deaf Interpreters. That's a perfectly understandable feeling among those interpreters.

This article will mainly focus on five reasons of the importance of deaf/hearing team interpreting; "the double checking system," "the grace period of time in the thinking processing," "monitoring one another for affect and neutrality," "the deaf consumer's right to know what has been interpreted," and "the comfort usage of their language."

The Double Checking System

When the hearing interpreter hears a question and signs it to the deaf interpreter, the hearing interpreter has the opportunity to check if the message is the same when the deaf interpreter signs the question to the deaf consumer. The hearing interpreter can also watch the deaf consumer's answer and then watch the deaf interpreter before voicing the answer. Not only does this processing allow for the double checking, it also ensures the conveyance of the full integrity of message.

The deaf consumer also has the advantage to check if his/her message has been delivered properly by double-checking as the deaf interpreter relays the message to the hearing interpreter. This method will make the communication much more accurate. In addition, the consumer cannot blame the interpreters for their misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

The Grace Period of Time in the Thinking Processing

For the purposes of this discussion I will use the term "grace period" for the time in which a message is being relayed through a deaf/hearing team. Many deaf consumers appreciate this extra time. He/she

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can follow the interpretation of the message, thereby having more time to formulate a response. The grace period also is an advantage for the hearing interpreter because they have the opportunity to observe the answer twice. This then speeds up their processing time while interpreting. It also gives the deaf/hearing interpreters the opportunity to trust his/her intuition if the message gets across clearly. Its importance is to have pace in the interpretation processing, and benefits both consumer and interpreters.

Monitor Each Other for Affect and Neutrality

Often if the setting is fast paced, the hearing or even the deaf interpreter will not correctly convey the speaker's affect. In these situations, the affect/neutrality is either diminished or exaggerated. It then becomes crucial that the team of deaf/hearing interpreters carefully observe one another to ensure accurate interpretations of both content and affect. This will in turn ensure maximum adherence to the Code of Ethics and will earn respect from deaf and hearing consumers. The "trust" and "feedback" within the team of Deaf/hearing interpreters are the most important "tools" of workmanship in the interpreters field.

The Deaf Consumer's Right to Know What Has Been Interpreted

The deaf consumer tends to have good rapport with and respect for the deaf interpreter. It does not

mean the Certified Deaf Interpreter should be their advocate. The Certified Deaf Interpreter should not be biased. Their duty is to interpret the message that would be appropriate for the deaf person's level of communication. When the deaf consumer signs out, he/she will observe the Certified Deaf Interpreter's relaying the message. If the deaf interpreter should make a mistake, the deaf consumer will be able to correct the information. The deaf consumer usually leaves the assignment with much more satisfaction. They respect our work. This is yet another way we know that the interpretation is more accurate.

The Comfort Usage of Their Language

When a deaf consumer meets a hearing interpreter, they tend to figure out what to say. They tend to worry about their English, and try very hard to express themselves to avoid the possibility of misunderstanding and or misinterpretation. With the certified deaf interpreter's presence, they are more related and feel some relief. They usually express themselves more freely without any worry. This procedure makes the whole interpreting assignment more successful and pleasant.

The bottom line for those deaf people who are interested in becoming Certified Deaf Interpreters is that they should sign up for courses and training. Do not think "Oh, I know sign language and I don't have to study." AGAIN, it's very important that you know how to interpret and have the skill to work hearing interpreters. I will use the process of interpreting (going from sign language to target language, keeping the integrity of the message and equivalency of the message, while maintaining neutrality and following the Code of Ethics) and linguistic study of American Sign Language as several examples. Not only the processing, or knowing your own sign language, you will have to learn the terminology/signing of various settings, such as mental health vocabularies, legal terminology, and many other areas. ■