

# TBC news

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## **DEAF INTERPRETERS**

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More and more Deaf interpreters are being used in courtrooms, hospitals, and at public events across the country. The following is everything you've always wanted to know about Deaf interpreters, but were afraid to ask.

**What does Deaf interpreter mean? Is it the same as Relay interpreter?** Yes, they are the same, but since the telephone company has started using the term "relay" for their operators, many of us are beginning to use the expression "Deaf interpreters" to avoid confusion. So, what does Deaf interpreter mean? It simply means that the interpreter is Deaf.

**Isn't it impossible for Deaf people to interpret?** Certainly not! Any Deaf person who grew up in a Deaf school has already been an interpreter! Remember when the teacher would turn her back and the students would turn to each other and sign, "What did she say?" Well, every time we "translated" what the teacher said for each other, that was a form of interpreting!

**Where do we find Deaf interpreters?** Well, there are already many Deaf people interpreting for Deaf/Blind consumers; there are some in the legal field (in court rooms); some who use gestures for international Deaf people; and some who interpret at conferences and rallies. In less use are Deaf interpreters in the medical and mental health fields, but more and more are being used every day.

**How can someone become a Deaf interpreter?** Well, in the same way the United Nations chooses

native speakers of foreign languages to be interpreters, any Deaf person with ASL as her/his first (native) language can learn to become an interpreter. But, as with anyone in the field of interpreting, it is necessary to receive education, evaluation, and certification.

**How and where can Deaf people get training for interpreting?** There are workshops or classes for interpreters at the local community college and university level. But you must be an active participant in finding the right classes, or getting them offered in your city if no classes are available.

In these classes/workshops, the standard inter-

preting curriculum should be covered, which would include information about language, culture, the process of interpreting and the Code of Ethics of interpreters.

**How exactly does a Deaf interpreter interpret?** For example, let us look at the courtroom interpreter. The Deaf interpreter would face the Deaf client. A hearing interpreter would be there

to interpret the spoken message into sign for the Deaf interpreter. Yes, this means that there would be two interpreters there (one Deaf, one hearing). But this also means that the Deaf client is receiving the message from the court in a natural language. It also means that because the interpreter is Deaf too, not only is natural language being provided, but so is Deaf culture. This can be a first time ever experience for the Deaf person, **and it's about time!**

**At a recent rally in Washington, DC, there were Deaf people in the audience whose chins literally hit the ground when they saw a Deaf interpreter working for the first time. One person said, "That is the first time I understood everything without even having to think. It was so beautiful – pure ASL!"**