

## HOW TO USE AN INTERPRETER IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Interpreters relay information from one distinct language to another distinct language, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker, using language most readily understood by the student(s) they serve. Most interpretation is in American Sign Language (ASL) which is the official language of the Deaf community. Not all Deaf students understand it, as it may be that the students have a hearing loss and benefit more by using an Assistive Listening Device (ALD).

**Communication Link** - Think of an interpreter as a telephone. The telephone only facilitates communication; it is not able to give opinions, feedback, or instructions. The interpreter-like the telephone, will facilitate everything he/she hears, even if it is personal, confidential or unrelated to the topic at hand. Any information you discuss in the presence of an interpreter and a Deaf student, will be interpreted.

**Do I need to slow down?** - Slowing one's natural speech patterns is not usually necessary for interpreters; if the interpreter misses something or feels the instructor is going too fast, the interpreter will ask you to repeat the information.

**Who do I look at?** - When using an interpreter always maintain eye contact with the Deaf student. This is why it is encouraged for hearing individuals and interpreters to stand next to each other. This encourages the hearing individual to look at the Deaf individual instead of the interpreter. It also lets the Deaf student know the information is coming from the professor not the interpreter.

**Who do I speak to?** - When speaking to the Deaf student, address the student, not the interpreter. For example; avoid saying, "Tell him/her that..", or ask him/her if..."

**Voicing** - The interpreter will always use first person, both when signing and voicing. When the interpreter suddenly blurts out, "I don't understand", it is not a joke nor the interpreter's own complaint; it is the student requesting help.

**Confidentiality** - Interpreters must follow a strict code of ethics, one of which is Confidentiality. By Texas law, interpreters are not allowed to discuss ANY information about the student during or after an interpreting assignment, with the exception of a CASS staff interpreter which may also be working as an Advocate for the student.

## WORKING WITH DEAF STUDENTS AND SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- The Deaf student should be seated where they can see the professor and the interpreter.
- Proper seating affords the student a good peripheral view of the classroom dynamics.
- Both the professor and the interpreter/s should take up positions away from the glare of windows.
- The interpreter should be provided a chair without armrest as this inhibits signing space.
- If the professor moves about often, the interpreter may need to move with the professor to lessen the distance between the interpreter and the professor/speaker.
- If the class meets in an auditorium, the interpreter should stand or sit next to the speaker unless the distance between the stage and audience is too great. In that case, the interpreter may sit in the aisle close to the Deaf student.
- Because Deaf individuals depend on visual communication, make sure the lighting is good. When showing a film, give any instructions before lights are out for the student to see the interpreter. **All films and videos whether shown in the classroom or assigned to be seen outside of class must be accurately closed-captioned.** If you require assistance in captioning your videos, please contact UTEP's captioning department at:

[https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/ServiceCatalog/COMM\\_ClosedCaptioning.html](https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/ServiceCatalog/COMM_ClosedCaptioning.html)

**Guidelines provided by the 2008 Communication Skills Workshop for Interpreters at the Texas School for the Deaf (With the exception of some minor changes needed to fit University standards)**